QUEER GIRLS, TEMPORALITY & SCREEN MEDIA

NOT 'JUST A PHASE'

Whitney Monaghan

Queer Girls, Temporality and Screen Media

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Whitney Monaghan
Monash University
Clayton, Victoria, Australia

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CHAPTER 1

Just a Phase

As a teenager, everything I knew about being queer was gleaned from a small number of queer films and television series. I watched them in secret and held onto their messages and themes with fervent passion. Pieced together by way of sporadic and late night viewings of these films, my understanding of queer life was overly simplified. My real life, in comparison, seemed consistently incongruous with these films or television shows. Simply put, my coming-out story was, to me, a disappointing and banal tale. It did not fit into what I would learned to expect from the films and television series from my youth. As I have documented in my writings on queer television, I moved out of home at age 17 and came out to my mother via an email that concluded with a brief postscript: "p.s. I'm a lesbian." Thinking back on this moment, I cannot say how (or indeed whether) she replied, for I cannot quite remember. I do, however, remember that she was noticeably silent when I saw her a few months later. We were having a cup of tea when I finally summoned the courage to raise the issue. "So …" I said, choking on my Earl Grey, "about that email. It's probably … you know … just a phase. But I thought I should tell you." She replied with a calm "Cool," and then it was done. I had come out. Film and television had led me to believe that this would be a climactic and defining moment, an affirmation of my identity as a queer person. In reality, it was a bizarre anticlimax that concluded with a confusing statement wherein I semi-renounced everything I had earlier affirmed. I have often wondered why I uttered those last few words, why I insisted that

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my sexuality was a phase. I was effectively taking back the queer identity that I had wanted to talk about for so long, at the very moment that I was speaking about it for the first time.

This is not a surprising move when one comes to realise that non-normative sexuality is typically represented, for adolescent characters at least, according to a similar pattern of affirmation and renunciation. In 1987, one year before I was born, Canadian teen series *Degrassi Junior High* (1987–1991) (one of the first teen-oriented television series to represent teen homosexuality) featured an episode titled "Rumor has it," in which a teenage girl developed a crush on her female teacher after hearing a rumour that the teacher was a lesbian (episode 1.6). The episode concluded with both the teacher and the student confirming their heterosexuality. The incident was never spoken of again within the series.

Teen television's first queer boy was similarly fated. In 1994, US television's first ongoing queer adolescent character, Rickie Vasquez (Wilson Cruz), was introduced on the short-lived teen drama series *My So-Called Life* (1994–1995). Rickie was the only queer character on primetime US television in the mid-1990s and, as Glyn Davis suggests, "with his subtly camp eye rolls and hand gestures, single gold earring, penchant for eyeliner, soft voice and preference for hanging out in the girls' toilets, Rickie was always fairly clearly coded as queer" (128). However, he did not verbally articulate his sexuality until the final episode of the series, meaning that his affirmation was promptly renounced, subsumed by the ongoing flow of the televisual medium. As Davis argues, Rickie's final scene was centred on his coming out "which would seem to suggest such a confession as a potential narrative end point … But should it not have been a beginning?" (128).

Not much had changed by the time I reached adolescence. Throughout the 2000s, many representations of queer girls were brief and characterised queerness as "a passing phase" of both adolescence and television, suggesting the queer girl characters of this period were valued only as an issue to be dealt with in a once-off episode or other limited way (Beirne, "Screening the dykes of Oz" 7). In 2004, 2 years before I came out to my mother, the typically conservative Australian soap *Neighbours* (1985–present) featured a brief storyline in which lesbian character Lana (Bridget Neval) kissed her heterosexual best friend Sky (Stephanie McIntosh). As I examine in Chap. 3, the two characters remained friends but the storyline ended unsurprisingly with Sky confirming her feelings for her boyfriend and Lana leaving the series shortly after (Beirne, "Screening

the dykes of Oz"). Later in 2004, a similarly problematic queer storyline occurred on the popular US series *One Tree Hill* (2003–2012). Michaela Meyer discusses this storyline in terms of its depiction of "transitional bisexuality"—that is, when bisexuality is depicted as a transitional identity between heterosexuality and homosexuality ("Representing bisexuality" 374). Within it, the queer girl character Anna (Daniella Alonso) deliberated over her sexual identity, outing herself as bisexual (episode 2.15). But two episodes later she declared that she was, in fact, "gay" (episode 2.17). Anna was subsequently written out of the series.

At the beginning of 2005, my final year of high school, another high-profile romantic storyline was developed between Marissa (Mischa Barton) and Alex (Olivia Wilde) on the popular US series *The O.C.* (2003–2007). Alison Burgess argues that this storyline "began as something new and exciting, representing a nuanced and fluid understanding of women's sexuality" but eventually it "reified the dominance of homophobic and heteronormative discourses in popular culture" (211–212). As I discuss in Chap. 5, the Marissa/Alex relationship was based around the representation of queerness as a brief rebellion or experiment. Her mother, Julie Cooper (Melinda Clarke) described it as "probably just a phase"—"After all, it was for me," she stated mid-way through the storyline. When the relationship inevitably expired, Alex was written out and never spoken of again, while Marissa exclusively pursued male love interests, her "phase" never again mentioned.

Quite a few years have passed since I had that conversation with my mother and, funnily enough, I am still queer. Unlike the queer characters within these television series of my adolescence, for whom queerness was represented as a temporary departure on the journey towards adult heterosexuality, my queerness was not "just a phase." In 2015, it is tempting to argue that things have changed and that film and television no longer depict queerness as a phase. My mother has become an incredibly supportive figure, and perhaps more importantly, queer girls now seem to be key characters in major television series as well as the protagonists and love interests in both short and feature length films around the globe. They were also the darlings of the 2013 Cannes Film Festival where Abdellatif Keniche's *Blue is the Warmest Colour* won the highest prize, the Palme d'Or. Notably, the prize was awarded not only to Keniche but also to the film's two stars, Adele Exarchopoulous and Lea Seydoux, for their roles in the intense story of a 15-year-old girl who dreams about her first love and develops a passionate relationship with a college girl.

Despite this progress, queer girls still continue to function within limiting narratives premised upon the same patterns of affirmation and renunciation. This book aims to consider how these patterns occur, why it is problematic and how some screen texts have responded. While the same-sex attraction of girl characters is typically represented as "just a phase" of unruly adolescent development, queer boys tend to be represented through narratives of trauma (of being bullied, for instance) that culminate in the assertion (and often societal acceptance) of boys' sexuality. This plot device is likely the result of the gendered manner in which adolescence is culturally constructed. For instance, where screen media texts suggest that the development of physical and emotional intimacy between girls is a normal part of girlhood, the same level of intimacy between boys would typically come to signify nascent homosexual desire. For this reason, queer girls have come to exist within screen media in a unique manner, much the same way as José Muñoz argues of queerness itself as "innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments" that disappear at the very instant we finally feel we have a grasp of them ("Ephemera as evidence" 6).

This book is about these fleeting representations. It is not, however, concerned with issues of visibility, or positive representation for that matter. Instead, it makes a series of critical interventions. It closely examines queer girls in screen media from the late 1990s onwards, asking: What are the most common narrative, formal and ideological patterns in representations of desire, romance and intimacy between girls in contemporary screen media? Have there been recurring themes and structures of temporality in these figurations of queer love between girls? If so, what does the persistence of those themes and structures reveal about our understandings not only of queer sexuality, but, more broadly, of girls' gendered experiences of love, sex and growing up? Are there alternatives to the dominant way of representing queer girlhood? What are the ideological functions of those alternatives? How might they critique heteronormative models of human development or "coming of age" that underpin many contemporary screen texts? Can they offer new understandings of girlhood, sexuality and growing up that affirm a queer future without later renouncing that same affirmation?

In response to the first of these questions, through analysis of a wide range of queer girl-themed texts from both Western and non-Western teen television series and teenpics, art-house, queer and independent cinemas, as well as new forms of digital video, this book analyses the centrality of a heteronormative temporal logic in representations of queer girls

and girlhood. It locates and describes a pervasive modern discourse on same-sex attraction that has asserted the impossibility of queer futures: such attractions are dominantly depicted in way that emphasise the transitoriness of queer desire and subjectivity. As in *Degrassi Junior High*, *Neighbours*, and The O.C. queer girls have dominantly been represented through particular formal and narrative devices that, in many instances, render the queerness of the queer girl "just a phase" to be overcome through the heteronormatively driven "coming of age" storyline underpinning many contemporary texts. Discussing this in relation to media texts from the early 2000s, Susan Driver argues:

> A brief shy kiss, a tomboy transgression, an 'innocent' crush, and playful flirtations are often valued only as temporary departures from a normative course toward feminine heterosexual adulthood. Within media portrayals, a girl's queer transgressions commonly reinforce, rather than disrupt, her development into a normal woman. In other words, elusive signs of gender and sexual variance become framed in terms of a privileged and inevitable heterosexual resolution. (*Queer Girls* 7)

What will become apparent throughout this book and what is also evident in Driver's reading is that queer experience is routinely temporalised as "a passing phase" within contemporary screen media. This is particularly so for female characters, and as I argue throughout the following chapters, this is because the figure of the "girl" is consistently bound up with heteronormative ideas of adolescent development. For screen media's queer girls, queer sexuality is rendered as a juvenile desire or a subjectivity to grow up and out of. Yet this book's central claim is that while the dominant temporality of such representations is problematic—resulting in the trope of queerness as "a passing phase" some texts do offer promising alternatives in their more complex, queerer approaches to temporality. These alternatives lead me to the remaining questions driving this book: How queer girls are temporalised in this way, what the alternatives are, and what these might mean for broader cultural understandings of girls, growing up and sexuality. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 are framed around these latter questions. In each chapter, I identify a particular way that screen media texts have temporalised queer girls as "a passing phase" before locating alternative representations that challenge or problematise the pervasive norm. In the penultimate chapter, however, I also turn my attention to the potential of digital representations to contest the dominant temporalisation of

the queer girl as simply being in "a passing phase." Digital media accomplishes this alternative view by fragmenting temporal moments, cultivating a particular disjunctive rhythm and, through this, forging new temporal connections. In the book's concluding chapter, I consider the issue of growing up through representations of queer girls beyond girlhood.

In order to comprehend how these texts function, close textual analysis of all of the films, television series and videos has been undertaken and is featured throughout each of the chapters. While the question of audiences, and in some instances fan activity, would complement this analysis, logistical considerations have simply precluded the opportunity to conduct audience-based research in this instance. Instead, this book provides a large-scale text-based analysis that considers how elements such as *mise-en-scène*, style, narrative structure, montage and music operate within screen media texts with respect to the representation of queer girls, while closely examining how these aspects work inside or below the obvious, dialogue-based moves of the plot. Many of these aspects are overlooked by studies of queer representation but are of vital importance to any study of screen media, as David Bordwell suggests in his discussion of film:

> Style matters because what people call content comes to us in and through the patterned use of the medium's techniques … Style is the tangible texture of a film, the perceptual surface we encounter as we watch and listen, and that surface is our point of departure in moving to plot, theme, feeling—everything that matters to us. (*Figures traced in light* 32)

To further explore how contemporary screen media temporalises queer girls as "a passing phase" this book also draws on the critical insights offered by queer theory and queer studies of film and television. Examining queer girls through a queer paradigm, I mobilise the radical potential of "queer" throughout the book to challenge the apparent stability of heterosexuality and destabilise normative conceptualisations of both girlhood and development.

Terminology

One of this book's key propositions is that the queer girl operates within screen media and broader cultural discourse as both a represented and rhetorical figure. The term "queer girl" is used throughout the book to refer to an adolescent (typically high-school aged), female-identifying

and female-desiring subject that operates as both a representation within texts and a rhetorical figure. I have opted to employ "queer" rather than "lesbian" because most of the characters I analyse are not explicitly identified as "lesbian" characters. These characters do not name the desires, intimacies and romances shared with other female-identifying characters as "lesbian," which in some cultural contexts is precluded as a term of identification.

Through employing "queer girl" as a central term, I do not mean to offer a line of thinking that reduces a multitude of sexual categories and epistemologies to bland sameness. Nor do I intend to read screen texts from various cultural contexts through a Westernising frame. Acknowledging cultural difference throughout this book, I employ "queer" in order to situate my argument within a specific theoretical paradigm while making a conceptual move away from the rigidity of "lesbian" as an identity category. There is a beautifully animated short video "The Queer Umbrella: Responses to what it means to be Queer" created by YouTuber Rosa Middleton that provides a clear and concise definition of "queer" as I am employing it throughout this book. Narrated by Middleton, a queer girl herself, this video argues that queer is "a definitive, self-defining, anti-definition" ("The Queer Umbrella"). Queer, she asserts, is "a word for anyone who doesn't feel they fit into the box that they've been given" and for many "it is about making your own box to tick" ("The Queer Umbrella"). Queer is a way of naming, describing, doing and being. It is a deliberately ambiguous term that Annamarie Jagose argues "depends on its resistance to definition" (1). In placing "queer" alongside "girl" I aim to mobilise the radical potential of queer theory in order to destabilise the typically heteronormative categorisation of "girl." Combining these terms, I elucidate a rhetorical figure at once fixed and fluid, discrete and deliberately vague. In doing so, I follow Susan Driver, who employs "queer girl" throughout Queer Girls and Popular Culture: Reading, Resisting and Creating Media "as an imperfect term that is both distinct and purposefully pliable enough to allow for contestation surrounding the very boundaries that construct and restrict ideals of girlhood" (3).

Because of its deliberate vagueness, this terminology is not without its flaws. Throughout this book I have been faced with incongruences between the possibilities of the queer girl as a rhetorical figure and the realities of its representation. Namely, despite the fact that "queer girl" is conceived of as a radical (indeed, queer) figure, the represented queer girls that I have come across are largely cisgender, feminine in appearance

and conventionally attractive. This is likely a result of mainstream media's construction of female adolescent identity as exemplarily consumerist. It results in a distinct lack of diversity of gender expression in both studies of girls and representations of them. This issue is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this book. While I do hope that this work inspires other scholars to take this up in their research, the task of engaging with the temporalities of queer girls' representation in post-1990s screen media means, on the one hand, restricting the focus of my analysis to this largely mainstream conception of what a queer girl looks like while, on the other, extending the ways in which scholarship on this figure has been done.

Visibility

In many important ways, this book responds to Amy Villarejo's *Ethereal Queer: Television, Historicity, Desire*, published in 2014. In this work, Villarejo encourages thinking against the "often contradictory discourses of representation justice, identification, and recognition that animate most academic studies of LGBTQ" appearance in television, and screen media more generally (5). Villarejo argues that there are some key claims about queer representation in the USA: that "we're witnessing the explosion of gay TV," "that gay men and lesbians hardly appear at all," or that "while television has always been *queer* … it has only recently been or become recognisably *gay*" (2–3). Girls' studies scholar Marnina Gonick is one of many who note and comment upon an increase in representation, suggesting:

> The media is one of the sites where there has been increasing visibility and a trend toward more positive representations of Queer people and issues. Images of gay life are more prevalent … than in previous decades, and as a result young people are able to associate themselves with "alternative" sexual and gender categories at younger and younger ages. ("Sugar and Spice" 133)

Statistically speaking, this is best reflected in the USA where GLAAD's *Where We Are On TV* report for 2013 indicates that 3.3 % of series regulars on primetime television are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) or queer characters. While this is a decrease in representation from the previous year when 4.4 % of series regulars were queer, general trends reflect increasing numbers of queer representation: 2.9 % in 2011, 3.9 % in 2010, 3 % in 2009, 2.6 % in 2008 and 1.1 % in 2007 (GLAAD *Where We Are On TV 2012* 3). GLAAD's report highlights that of 796 regular characters across 97 primetime-scripted programmes in the 2013 television

season, 26 were identified as LGBT. In addition to this, GLAAD further locates 20 recurring queer characters on broadcast television in this season and 42 regular characters on cable programming (*Where We Are On TV 2013* 3–4). Queer girls only comprise a small subset of these figures, but in recent years they do seem to have been appearing with more regularity within both film and television. As highlighted in the appendix to this volume (which, I must note, is not a truly exhaustive or comprehensive list—these are only the examples that have come to my attention) this is not limited to US representations. In the context of film, Rebecca Beirne's study of teenage lesbians in international cinema also identifies a steady increase in representation of the queer girl since the late 1990s. Beirne's research focuses on the period spanning 1931–2007 and locates the queer girl in one film in the 1930s, two from the 1950s, two from the 1970s, ten from the 1990s and twelve from the 2000s ("Teen lesbian desires and identities" 259). While this indicates a clear increase in the representation of queer girls over the past few decades, the fact that only 27 films are located also suggests that the queer girl remains a minor figure within global screen culture. This latter point reflects Villarejo's argument regarding the absence of queer images within contemporary screen culture.

According to Villarejo, these claims are problematic because in many instances they are based upon a teleological narrative of progress. Rejecting this narrative is a difficult task, because as Heather Love argues, queer critics, scholars, writers and thinkers "are in practice deeply committed to the notion of progress; despite our reservations, we just cannot stop dreaming of a better life for queer people" (3). While I too reject the trite teleological narrative of progress that equates increases in representation with political change, these statistics have helped me to think about how representations of queer girls have varied over time. In researching this book, I noticed that there have been times when queer girls were notably absent from both cinema and television screens or, at the very least, that there have been years, seasons and episodes when queer girls seemed much more marginalised than now and representations were much more difficult to locate. Viewing many of these representations as they are broadcast on my television or distributed to my local art-house cinema or queer film festival, I have often felt as if queerness and the queer girl is "just a phase"—of television, of cinema culture, of screen media. What I find interesting about this, and what will be taken up in this book, is that a large number of these representations also construct queerness as "a passing phase," albeit one of adolescence.

It is not my intention to further comment upon issues of visibility. For a long time these have remained at the core of gay and lesbian scholarship

on screen media, and like Villarejo, I firmly believe that we need to move beyond them. This is because, as I demonstrate in Chap. 2, despite these reports of recent increases in visibility, contemporary scholarship does not seem to have an adequate conception of what a queer girl is, as a rhetorical figure and as a figure represented on screen. Queer girls are routinely overlooked by girls' studies, queer studies and studies of film and television and scholarship in these areas seems unable to move beyond the continual cycle of lament and celebration over lack and increases in representation. Our critical energies could be better spent.

With this in mind, one of the ambitions at the heart of this book is to offer a new way of thinking about queer representation in contemporary screen media. While it is not my aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the ways that queer girls have been represented through time in any specific national context, this book works towards understanding how queer girls have been represented in popular screen media since the late 1990s and how these representations are underpinned in ways that extend beyond national boundaries.

Across Cultures

In bringing together films, television series and video from a variety of national contexts, including those beyond the Anglophone West, I have been intrigued by the similar temporal logics underpinning representations of queer girls. While acknowledging that sexual categories and epistemologies vary across cultures, one key proposition within this book is that there is a cross-cultural currency to the temporal logics that limit queer experience or same-sex desire to "just a phase" of adolescence.

In many cases, these ideas about the temporariness of homosexual desire can be loosely traced to early European sexological and psychoanalytic discourse. A key figure in this scholarship is British physician Havelock Ellis who published *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* throughout the early 1900s. In *Volume Two: Sexual Inversion*, Ellis explored homosexuality (or, "sexual inversion" as he described it) and conceived of homosexual desire as either congenital and thus permanent or situational and for the most part temporary:

> This is a spurious kind of homosexuality, the often precocious play of natural instinct. In the girl who is congenitally predisposed to homosexuality it will continue and develop; in the majority it will be forgotten as quickly as possible, not without shame, in the presence of the normal object of sexual love. (*Sexual Inversion*, n.p)

For Ellis, situational homosexuality was a passing phase of "passionate friendships, of a more or less unconsciously sexual character" that developed between both girls and boys in the absence of opposite-sex partners (n.p). While he did write about boys, it should be noted that Ellis considered this type of relationship far more prevalent for girls. He offered four key reasons for this, and these are reflective of typical perceptions of gendered adolescence: that boys "would regard such a relationship as unmanly" because they are more aware of sex and sexuality; that girls have a stronger need for affection towards other people; that girls have less opportunity for locating an appropriate outlet for their sexual feelings because they are socially compelled to "hold the opposite sex at arm's length"; and that "conventional propriety recognises a considerable degree of physical intimacy between girls, thus at once encouraging and cloaking the manifestation of homosexuality" (n.p).

According to Ellis, this temporary homosexuality was especially fostered within educational and employment settings where girls (and women) were in constant association, without the company of men. Boarding schools were thus key locations for Ellis, and he emphasised them as the place where "homosexuality first shows itself" (n.p). Notably, Ellis considered the "girlish devotions" associated with transitory adolescent homosexuality to be "found in all countries," citing studies of relationships between girls within schools and colleges around the world (n.p). In an appendix on "the school-friendships of girls," Ellis further highlighted what he saw as a remarkable similarity between schoolgirl romances in Italian, English and American high schools. In each of these accounts, same-sex relationships are overwhelmingly framed as the product of girls' natural, albeit misguided, sexual desires. Accordingly, Ellis describes romances of this nature as a "tenderness natural to this age and sex" (n.p). His perspective is, I think, succinctly articulated where he describes female same-sex attraction as "a spurious kind of homosexuality" that is likely to be forgotten (n.p).

Ellis' insistence on the situational and temporary nature of same-sex desire between schoolgirls leads me to what can best be described as "immaturity theories" of sexuality. These treat same-sex desire as a natural step in heterosexual development, and seem to be the origin of the pop-psychological framing of a gay/queer/passing "phase" theory in broader cultural discourse. Of course, many of these ideas were influenced by Freud, who laid out his developmental model of sexuality in "The Three Essays" in 1905. As Jack Drescher argues in *Psychoanalytic Therapy and the Gay Man*, Freud "saw homosexuality as a developmental

arrest, a fixation, or a sign of immaturity" (52). A related perspective is offered within Harry Stack Sullivan's Interpersonal Theory, published in 1953, which positions homosexuality as a necessary (and, ideally temporary) step in normal heterosexual development. Sullivan argued that children need more complex interpersonal relations as they grow up, one stage being what he described as "chumship." According to Sullivan, adult homosexuals were those who failed to successfully negotiate this phase (245, 246–247). Connected to this are Charles Socarides in 1978, who argued that "the homosexual has been unable to successfully traverse the separation-individuation phase of development" (63), and Elaine Siegel's *Female Homosexuality: Choice Without Volition*, first published in 1988, which describes female homosexuality in particular as developmental arrest, wherein the subject is stuck in a pre-oedipal phase (23). As in Ellis' *Sexual Inversion*, these accounts of sexual development emphasise same-sex desire as a temporary phase that ideally dissipates upon maturation into heterosexual adulthood. Interestingly, these ideas are not limited to Euro-American modernity. They have travelled globally and, as this book demonstrates, they are remarkably persistent within broader cultural representations of queer girls, becoming, as Drescher argues, part of a kind of "everyday cultural perspective" on same-sex desire (50).

While it is not possible, or indeed advisable, to follow these ideas along a neat line of cross-cultural transmission, in more recent years both Tze-lan D. Sang and Fran Martin have traced their proliferation from Western discourse to modern Chinese culture. Both Martin and Sang's works are exemplary, providing detailed accounts of the complexities of particular sexual categories and epistemologies over time. Sang's *The Emerging Lesbian: Female same-sex desire in modern China*, published in 2003, examines literary culture to account for transitions between pre-modern and modern understandings of sexuality within Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. Notably, Sang draws attention to parallels between intimate female friendships depicted by Republican-era Chinese writers, and romantic friendships among nineteenth-century women in Euro-American contexts (135).

In part responding to Sang, Martin's *Backward Glances: Contemporary Chinese Cultures and the Female Homoerotic Imaginary*, published in 2010, locates and defines a "memorial discourse" framing female same-sex desire in modern Chinese culture. Drawing attention to pop-psychology and media cultures, popular fiction and the lived experiences of schoolgirls, Martin notes a "remarkably pervasive conceptual linkage of female

same-sex love with youth" that is universalising, and notably, linked to the "immaturity theories" of sexuality (21). Although Martin makes a conceptual linkage to Euro-American sexological traditions, she also argues that the dissemination of these ideas cannot fully be explained via a straightforward narrative of Westernisation. She notes that it is important to acknowledge that, in this case, "Westernisation is not direct but filtered through Japanese interpretations of the material which consequently intensified … interest in the figure of the same-sex-loving schoolgirl" and, further, that this figure is also greatly influenced by locally embedded narratives (48). In tracing the manifestation of this temporal logic across the three geocultural areas of mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, she also draws attention to the ways that same-sex desire is represented according to local historical and cultural particularities.

Both Martin and Sang provide excellent accounts of the unique transculturation of these ideas surrounding the temporariness of female same-sex desire. While it is not my intention to rehearse their arguments here, the major project undertaken in this book involves a similar practice: that of tracing the ways that particular narrative logics and structures of temporality are represented, and examining how these extend beyond national boundaries. While Martin argues that the discourse of "temporary homosexuality" in same-sex schools is invoked so frequently in Chinese cultural life that it "may be considered a form of cultural common sense," what is intriguing to me is that this same temporal logic seems to be "cultural common sense" within representations across the globe, many of which are outlined in the appendix to this volume (21). This book does not mean to assume an inherent similarity between varying geocultural understandings of sexuality, but simply to point out correspondences between the ways that girls' same-sex love is framed in and through cultural production.

Queer Temporalities

As this book is focused on the *temporalisation* of queer girls and indeed the queer girl as a temporal rhetorical figure, it is firmly situated within the temporal turn of queer theory, the beginnings of which can be traced to Carolyn Dinshaw's research on pre-modern sexualities in *Getting medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre and Postmodern*, published in 1999. Within this work, Dinshaw theorises queer sexualities within a historical frame as "affective relations across time" (138). Over the past decade, a more focused body of scholarship on temporality within queer

theory has tended to fall on either side of opposing anti-social and affirmative perspectives. Despite their fiercely oppositional stances, both sides of this debate explore ways that dominant heterosexual ideology comes to shape our understandings of the temporality of social life. Such scholarship draws attention to the ways that heteronormative temporal logics valorise linear and progressive life narratives; lives marked by a particular set of celebrated milestones—birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, reproduction, parenthood, anniversaries, retirement and death. Queer life narratives, on the other hand, do not fit with these dominant temporal logics. Non-linear in their temporality, they do not follow the same milestones and are often not celebrated.

It is worth considering how queer scholars have both theorised and responded to these logics of heteronormative temporality, as they offer a number of points of interest. They speak to the particular ways that heterosexual ideology comes to influence the temporalities of our daily lives, our greater life narratives, our goals and aspirations, the milestones we value as we grow up, and indeed the very notion of growing up itself. Some scholars have also considered what queer temporalities might look like. These scholars aim to "reimagine "queer" as a set of possibilities produced out of temporal and historical difference" and to illuminate "the manipulation of time as a way to produce both bodies and relationalities (or even non-relationality)" (Freeman, "Introduction" 159). Although the opposing positions differ in their arguments about how queerness should respond to the normative, they are linked in the way that they theorise the time of queerness as both asynchronous—in the sense of being out-of-sync with the normative—and untimely—in the sense of being outside of normative time. As Freeman argues in the introduction to a special issue of the journal *GLQ*:

> the sensation of asynchrony can be viewed as a queer phenomenon—something felt on, with, or as a body, something experienced as a mode of erotic difference or even as a means to express or enact ways of being and connecting that have not yet arrived or never will. ("Introduction" 159)

Queer temporality's dominant paradigm has been termed the "anti-social thesis." It marks a shift away from projects of reclamation within queer theory and activism, towards a negative, anti-social and anti-relational theory of sexuality. This perspective is often attributed to Leo Bersani's *Homos*, published in 1995, in which he argues that "homo-ness" is inherently anti-relational. Questioning whether "a homosexual [should] be a good

citizen," Bersani opposes a "rage for respectability … in gay life today," that he locates within the dissolution of gay identity, calls for gay marriage and parenting within gay-rights activism, and in the sanitisation of gay sex (113). As Robert Caserio notes, Bersani's formulation has inspired "a decade of explorations of queer unbelonging" (819). However, it is the position taken up in Lee Edelman's influential *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, published in 2004, that now dominates the anti-social, anti-relational project within contemporary queer theory and links these ideas to temporality.

In this powerful polemic, Edelman links queer theory to the death drive and coins the term "reproductive futurism" in order to explore a governing logic of heteronormative temporality that he links to "the pervasive invocation of the Child as the emblem of futurity's unquestioned value" (*No Future* 3–4). Through this, Edelman argues that children are signifiers of family; within political and popular culture they come to act as the site upon which the future is projected and the social order is based. In emphasising the centrality of "reproductive futurism" within heteronormative temporality, Edelman asserts that "queerness" and "the future" are incongruous as "the queer comes to figure the bar to every realisation of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure and form" (*No Future* 4). Aligning queerness against futurity in this manner, Edelman argues that Queer "names the side of those *not* 'fighting for the children'" and thus not fighting for the future (*No Future* 3).

Rather than rejecting "this ascription of negativity to the queer" Edelman proposes a turn towards the negativity that the queer subject structurally represents (*No Future* 4). Although it must be noted that he proposes this not in the hope of creating a better future for queer people—as he asserts, "such a hope, after all would only reproduce the constraining mandate of futurism" (*No Future* 4). Instead, Edelman argues for a refusal of "the insistence of hope itself as affirmation" (*No Future* 4). Queers then, as Edelman argues, must respond to the logics of "reproductive futurism" by refusing both hope and the future. Or, as Edelman, states:

> by saying explicitly what Law and the Pope and the whole Symbolic order for which they stand hear anyway in each and every expression or manifestation of queer sexuality: Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorised; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws with both capital ls and with small; fuck the whole network of symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop. (*No Future* 29)

Also working within this anti-social paradigm is Judith/Jack Halberstam. Responding to Edelman, Halberstam argues for a more explicitly political framing of queer negativity and a broadening of the archive of the negative ("The Politics of Negativity" 824). Engaging negativity in an explicitly political manner, Halberstam argues that queer uses of time develop in opposition to logics of normative "reproductive temporality." In developing a theory of queer temporality, Halberstam posits that if queerness can be imagined as "an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices" it can, therefore, be detached from sexual identity and considered as a threat to heteronormative ways of living (*In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* 1).

Published in 2005, Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* nonetheless shares similarities with Edelman's work, particularly in respect to the conflation between "the future" and the heteronormative. Like Edelman, Halberstam argues that notions of respectability and "the normal" are "upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality" (*Queer Time and Place* 4). These temporal logics are naturalised and made explicit within conceptions of human development through which Halberstam argues that "we chart the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence" (Halberstam, *Queer Time and Place* 4).

In theorising *queer temporality*, Halberstam emphasises alternatives to such logics. Queer time, Halberstam argues, allows a shift in focus from the pursuit of a normative future, to a conception of time similar to what Charles Baudelaire described in his examination of modernity: that is, in emphasising "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" (13). Although Halberstam is critical of "forward-looking, reproductive, and heteronormative politics of hope," his argument is based upon the idea that queer subcultures can produce alternative temporalities ("Politics of Negativity" 823). Queer temporalities, Halberstam argues, allow for lives to be imagined outside of the celebrated milestones of life experience. Such temporalities may thus disrupt the adult/youth binary and allow us to explore how queer subcultures prompt "different forms of adulthood, or the refusal of adulthood and new modes of deliberate deviance" (*Queer Time and Place* 174).

In response to this anti-social, anti-future paradigm, other theorists have developed alternate conceptions of temporality, emphasising queerness alongside utopianism and affirmation. Unlike the scholars who reject

the future at all costs, the optimistic side of this debate conceptualises a return "to the revolutionary potential of queer studies, and seek[s] to reimagine a hopeful, forward-reaching, world-making queer theory that matters as the future" (O'Rourke 108). These scholars emphasise the pervasiveness of heteronormative temporal logics, yet they embrace the queer potential of the future rather than rejecting it outright. For instance, Kathryn Bond Stockton's 2009 book, *The Queer Child; Or, Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*, explores these logics in relation to childhood development, which she argues "has been relentlessly figured as vertical movement upward (hence 'growing up') toward full stature, marriage, work, reproduction and the loss of childishness" (4). Countering Edelman's rejection of the child, however, Stockton centralises childhood, exploring the queer potential of it through her bold argument that "every child is queer" (3). The temporality of Stockton's queer child is a time of delay. She argues that for queer adults, the image of the gay child often conjures memories of "desperately feeling there was simply nowhere to grow" (3). Elaborating on this, she describes the experience of queer childhood as:

> a frightening, heightened sense of growing toward a question mark. Or growing up in a haze. Or hanging in suspense—even wishing time would stop, or just twist sideways, so that one wouldn't have to advance to new or further scenes of trouble. (3)

These experiences and feelings about childhood illuminate the limits of developmental vernacular because, as Stockton argues, they demonstrate that "there are ways of growing that are not growing up" (11). Challenging "the vertical, forward-motion metaphor of growing up," Stockton conceptualises a theory of lateral development, arguing that the queer child grows sideways (11). While the phrase "growing up" might be "a short-sighted, limited rendering of human growth" because it implies that growth ceases "when full stature (or reproduction) is achieved," Stockton's conceptualisation of sideways growth "suggests that the width of a person's experience or ideas, their motives or their motions, may pertain at any age" (11). In thinking growth laterally, Stockton's theorisation of queer childhood explores sideways movement as a queer strategy and offers queer theory a means to reconsider heteronormative frames of temporality and history without rejecting future-orientation. The idea of "growing sideways" is taken up in detail in Chap. 3 and later reflected

upon in the book's conclusion. This idea emphasises the intimate relations between lateral, rhizomatic movement and queerness; it resists the logics of heteronormative temporality through the location of "energy, pleasure, and (e)motion in … back-and-forth of connections and extensions that are not reproductive" (Stockton 13).

In Chap. 4, I take a further move away from the anti-social, anti-relational paradigm through the work of José Esteban Muñoz. Operating from a position antithetical to Edelman's argument in *No Future*, Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, published in 2009, acts as a manifesto for the future, arguing that "the future is queerness' domain" (1). In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz coins the phrase "straight time" to refer to the temporal logics that underpin both hetero-and homo-normative politics. Like Edelman, Muñoz argues that dominant culture views queer subjects as people without a future, especially those who choose not to be biologically reproductive. Casting queer people as "developmentally stalled, forsaken" and without "the complete life promised by heterosexual temporality," "straight time" is thus, according to Muñoz, the "self-naturalising" and linear temporality that figures minoritarian queer subjects as futureless, telling them "that there is no future but the here and now of … everyday life" (*Cruising Utopia* 98, 22). Emphasising the pervasiveness of these temporal logics, Muñoz asserts that heteronormative culture "makes queers think that both the past and future do not belong to them"—"All we are allowed to imagine," he writes, "is barely surviving in the present" (*Cruising Utopia* 112).

From this point, he theorises a response to these logics in a way that departs from queer theory's anti-social and anti-relational paradigm. Where Edelman contends that queer subjects must respond to these logics by rejecting the pull of the future and embracing the negativity of this present, Muñoz argues that the present is "not enough," that it is "impoverished and toxic" for those who "do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations" (*Cruising Utopia* 27). Rejecting anti-social queer theory's emphasis on the "here and now," Muñoz asserts that "what we need to know is that queerness is not yet here but it approaches like a crashing wave of potentiality" (*Cruising Utopia* 185). Here Muñoz positions queerness itself as a response to the "impoverished" temporality of the present, arguing that queerness "should and could be about a desire for another way of being both in the world and in time" (96). From this position, he conceptualises a form of queer theory

within which "queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present" (1). As he so beautifully writes:

> The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalising rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is the longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough. (*Cruising Utopia* 1)

It must be noted that Muñoz does not simply call for a rejection of the present. Against the linearity of straight time, Muñoz presents an argument based around the notion that "queerness's ecstatic and horizontal temporality is a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world" (*Cruising Utopia* 25). Taken up in detail in Chap. 4, queerness is, for Muñoz, "an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future" (*Cruising Utopia* 1).

Chapter 5 engages with a text that also operates from this affirmative side of the debate: Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness*, published in 2010. A text that challenges the anti-social argument that "if one is to be queer, happiness is ontologically risky and therefore should be refused, given up," *The Promise of Happiness* draws attention to the ways that happiness and "the good life" are linked to normativity. Happiness, she argues, "involves a way of being aligned with others, of facing the right way" (45). Through this alignment, Ahmed emphasises that happiness comes to mean "living a certain kind of life, one that reaches certain points and which, in reaching these points, creates happiness for others" (48).

Responding more directly to the anti-social thesis, Ahmed imagines the future as "what is kept open as the possibility of things not staying as they are, or being as they stay," and conceptualises a revolutionary happiness that "would be alive to chance, to chance arrivals, to the perhaps of a happening" (197–198). In countering the scripted, linear temporal logics of normativity, Ahmed argues that "the happy future is the future of the perhaps" (198). This conceptualisation of "the future of the perhaps" is taken up by Ellen McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen in the introduction to their edited book *Queer Times, Queer Becomings*, published in 2011.

In their introductory essay, titled "Becoming Unbecoming: Untimely Meditations," McCallum and Tuhkanen offer a "philosophical scaffolding" through which to understand queerness "not as an identity or substantive mode of being but as a way of becoming" (2, 8). Through this, they argue that temporality is intimately bound with queerness but that this temporality "is not that of *chronos*, of linear time whose very name mythically signals lineage" (8). Rather, in emphasising "the perhaps" or the potential of queer temporality, McCallum and Tuhkanen argue that "the contingencies of the queer might be closer to the time of *kairos*, the moment of opportunity" (8–9). It is this temporality of "the perhaps" and the related "what if" that is taken up in Chap. 6, which is reflected upon further in the conclusion in relation to how queer girls grow up.

Throughout this book, I argue that the heteronormative temporal logics outlined by scholars such as Edelman, Halberstam, Muñoz and Ahmed (but also scholars such as Elizabeth Freeman, Lauren Berlant and Heather Love among others) are embodied most succinctly in the figure of the queer girl who must eventually "grow up" and become a heterosexual woman. Although the dominant anti-social paradigm would embrace the negativity of this queer figure and reject aspirations for the future of its queerness, I favour the approach taken by scholars of the optimistic paradigm and those operating in-between, who provide a more productive means of examining temporality. I believe that moving beyond issues of visibility requires a series of complex critical interventions. These must work to problematize the temporal logics underpinning many depictions of queer life. However, this alone is not enough. The potential of queer temporalities must also be considered by research that locates and examines texts representing queer life aslant to the dominant temporal norms.

It is this recent attention to temporality that lends queer theory particularly well to the study of the time-based mediums of the screen and thus to the representation of queer girls within contemporary screen media. Film theorist Karl Schoonover is one of few scholars to take up queer temporality and screen media as sites of investigation. In "Wastrels of time: Slow cinema's laboring body, the political spectator, and the queer" he explores the affinities between queer temporality and film temporality in relation to what *Sight and Sound* editor Nick James has termed "slow cinema" (5). In this work, Schoonover explores the political potential of slowness by linking debates about this movement to the question of queer living. In doing so, he argues that both evoke questions around the value of human labour and productivity—like slow cinema, he argues that queerness "often looks

a lot like wasted time, wasted lives, wasted productivity" (73). In associating the non-productivity of queer life with the slow film, what Schoonover ultimately draws attention to is the value of cinematic temporality. Yet his argument raises a number of questions: Is slowness (and indeed cinema) the only means of challenging dominant temporal regimes? Can queer temporalities be evoked through other forms of screen media? If so, on what register might these be felt? What would a queer televisual temporality look like? What dominant temporal logic would it intervene in? What of queer video or new digital forms of screen media? Can these prompt queer conceptions of time?

Bringing together queer theory and television studies, Gary Needham partially answers these questions. In "Scheduling normativity: Television, the family, and queer temporality" Needham locates television as a particularly apt medium for negotiating queerness in relation to time. He argues that "more than any other medium or screen based form … it is television that can fully embrace the capacity to engage with the concept of queer temporality, quite simply because television's ontology is temporal" (153). Needham proposes that a consideration of the ways that queerness is constructed through the temporal mechanisms of the medium. Beyond issues of narrative and representation, this mode of linking queer temporality and television studies highlights the potential for screen media not only to portray queer characters but, more significantly, to imagine time queerly (Needham 157).

While this analysis is insightful, it too is limited by the insistence that there is one most appropriate medium for the expression of queer temporality. The study of the screen has always linked the moving image to temporality. For instance, although Mary Ann Doane's influential article "Information, crisis, catastrophe" argues that "the major category of television is time" and that "time is television's basis, its principle of structuration, as well as its persistent reference," film theory has also confronted ontological questions of film's unique temporality since its inception (222). Film theorist Todd McGowan argues that "from its inception, cinema has privileged time" and in an editorial on the concept of untimeliness within film, Jodi Brooks and Therese Davis locate cinema as "arguably *the* temporal art of the twentieth century" (McGowan 4; Brooks and Davis par. 8, emphasis original).

As many scholars have argued, the concept of "cinematic time" is complex, comprising multiple, intertwining layers of temporality. While recognising the connections between these three layers of temporality,

I am primarily concerned with the way that narrative film and television (and some experimental videos) shape time to tell their stories. For instance, through editing, shots may be structured to highlight different perspectives of a single moment, expressing the temporality of the "meanwhile"; relations between two distinct times may be juxtaposed through flash back/forward; transitions between times may be emphasised through fades or dissolves that suggest the passing of time; and temporal gaps may be constructed through ellipses. Time, or the perception of it, may also be quickened through fast-paced editing or, alternately, slowed down with static cameras, long takes and the emphasis of a constant *mise-en-scène* across multiple scenes.

Emphasising the temporal complexity of these formal techniques, film narratives often play with time in similar ways. As seminal film theorists David Bordwell and Kristen Thompson identify, narrative is "a chain of events occurring in space and time" (73). In altering the order of this chain of events, filmmakers often construct alternate narrative forms that challenge the linearity of the films of classical Hollywood. Films that present parallel, cyclic and non-linear stories are now common within both mainstream and international art cinema and these modes of representation offer much for queer theory, particularly in their depiction of non-sequential temporalities. The ongoingness of serialised television also poses a challenge to a typically closed narrative structure, drawing out individual narratives and creating complex narrative webs through the interconnection of multiple storylines. In addition to this, experimental and digital videos often eschew the conventions of narrative form, instead presenting moments of pure sensation or, when experimenting with time, portraying moments of distorted, complex or rhizomatic temporality.

In synthesising these ideas from both queer theory and film theory, the following chapters mark a critical intervention in contemporary discourses of queer and girl. They do this by focusing on the ways that queerness is contained to adolescence through the temporality of the formal and narrative mechanisms of film, television and video. Through this, I explore just how the queer girl is temporalised as "a passing phase" within various modes of representation, including the coming-out narrative, the nostalgic remembrance of a lost queer love and the representation of queerness as an outburst of rebellion or experimentation. In identifying films, videos and television series that question these dominant representational logics, I also explore the capacities of screen media to engage with queer theories of time, questioning how film, television and video might, as Needham suggests, offer the potential not only to portray queer girls but, more significantly, to use this figure to imagine time queerly.

Queer Girls, Temporality and Screen Media

Explicitly distinguishing queer girlhood from queer boyhood, Chap. 2 considers the question of "why it's different for a girl" and makes explicit links with feminist thought. Primarily, this chapter is framed around the question "Are Queer girls, girls?" posed by girls' studies scholar Marnina Gonick and traces scholarship on this figure through cultural, media and screen studies paradigms. Through a detailed account of key ideas within these fields, this chapter explains the critical significance of the queer girl as a rhetorical figure and lays the ground for the series of critical interventions that follow.

Chapter 3 is the first of my case studies; it investigates the way that queerness is depicted within mainstream US and Australian teen televisual narratives. I show how queerness is figured as "a passing phase" through particular plot devices and narrative forms including the coming-out narrative. I examine two case studies to illuminate how two more recent British series——*Sugar Rush* (2005–2006) and *Skins* (2007–2013)——challenge this dominant depiction of the queer girl. Through close analyses of these programmes and theories of seriality in general, I explore the integration of televisual seriality with representations of queer girls. In doing so, I consider how this approach elongates the time of the queer girl beyond "a passing phase" of adolescence.

In Chap. 4 I engage with what Fran Martin calls the "memorial mode of representation" by exploring films with retrospective narratives that are nostalgically tied to lost queer romances of youth, or "memorial schoolgirl romance." Extending Martin's argument, I also draw attention to issues of futurity that are raised by this retrospective and nostalgic representational mode. Following this, I turn my attention to the concept of nostalgia itself, employing queer theory alongside film theory to explore the nostalgic gaze within the Hong Kong film *Butterfly* (2004). While this film is also examined by Martin in her book *Backward Glances*, I offer an alternative reading by considering the film through Muñoz's ideas of queer futurity. I question how the nostalgic memories of the queer past might be employed within contemporary screen media to imagine, as Muñoz suggests, "new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds" (*Cruising Utopia* 1).

Chapter 5 explores the linkage between the representation of queerness as "a passing phase" and the experience of boredom. I begin by examining the ways that boredom has been considered a critical concept within scholarship on homosexuality and adolescence, as well as within critical

theory more generally. Then I identify two modes of representation that depict queer girls alongside boredom. The first of these modes focuses on a protagonist's experience of boredom and positions queerness as a temporary distraction. In contrast, the second mode of representation adopts an aesthetic of boredom through a strategic employment of soundtrack, narrative time, performance and visual composition that emphasises repetition and containment as a means of accessing the queer potential of boredom's threshold. As I demonstrate in my analysis of the Swedish film *Show Me Love* (1998), queerness and boredom are linked within this mode by a structure and aesthetic that both embrace and transcend boredom through the possibility of queer love and the subsequent potential for queer happiness.

In Chap. 6, I turn my attention to digital representations of the queer girl that contest the dominant temporalisation of this figure as a "passing phase." In this chapter, I explore the status of the queer girl within this new media landscape and frame my discussion around the mashup video. Building on feminist and queer applications of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conceptualisation of "minor literatures," I argue that queer girl mashups can be best understood as a form of what Patricia White calls "lesbian minor cinema." Analysing "Madchen in Uniform—What I go to school for" and "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" through White's framework—I suggest that this digital form expresses the queerness of the queer girl through a disjunctive off-the-expected-beat rhythm. As I demonstrate, this rhythm serves as a productive model for imagining time queerly and thus allows for an alternative temporalisation of the queer girl to the screen media that I discuss in earlier chapters.

In questioning what happens to queer girls as they grow up, Chap. 7 discusses the ways these representations offer a different understanding of human development, sexuality and girlhood in which neither queerness nor "girlness" is overthrown as part of "growing up." Films such as *Life Partners* (2014), *Appropriate Behaviour* (2014) and *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (2013) remind us, as Stockton argues, that "there are ways of growing that are not growing up" and, as Deleuze and Guattari write in A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia "girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes." As the final chapter argues, it is not only the queerness of the queer girl that remains part of her subjectivity as she moves into her queer future, her adult life, but also something of her radical girlness.

Ultimately, what this book offers is a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the representation of queer girls, and a means of rethinking the terms of their representation. This book is not a historiographical survey of media texts that have represented queer girls, but rather a set of clusters of examples organised around themes of temporality that underpin these representations: transience, nostalgia, boredom. I follow Elizabeth Freeman's lead in focusing on the close reading of a small number of case studies because, as she argues, "to close read is to linger, to dally, to take pleasure in tarrying, and to hold out that these activities can allow us to look both hard and askance at the norm" (*Time Binds* xvii). While I do not seek to respond to questions of the value of visibility or invisibility, I do propose an alternative critical approach that allows us to understand the queer girl through a framework that emphasises temporality and offers a means of generating productive new discourse around this often overlooked figure.

What is at stake, ultimately, is overcoming current problematic heteronormative temporal logics so that queer sexuality can in the future be affirmed without being negated by "but … you know … it's probably just a phase."

CHAPTER 2

"Are Queer Girls, Girls?"

In 2006, girls' studies scholar Marnina Gonick posed a series of important questions. "Are Queer girls, girls?" she asked, "What are the signs and discourses of girlhood and queerness that would be drawn on to respond to this query? What are the social, theoretical and epistemological issues at stake in asking this queer question?" (Gonick, "Sugar and Spice" 122). Investigating the experiences of Canadian girls throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, Gonick identified that *queer* girls consistently experienced exclusion at work, at school, in access to public spaces and within the media ("Sugar and Spice" 122–137). According to Gonick, what this suggested was that beyond the systematic failures of schooling systems, legal systems, media and social services, queer girls were also excluded from a broader cultural category: the category of "girl."

To address this issue of exclusion, Gonick asserted that we must unpack the normative meanings of the category "girl." To begin, we must ask, "What is a girl?" Quite simply, a girl is a female human child. According to heteronormative definitions, a girl is a child with two x chromosomes. However, transgender, gender diverse and intersex individuals rightly complicate this definition. So perhaps it is more accurate to say that a girl is a human child, gendered according to social and cultural norms that determine what is (and is not) appropriate, in terms of behaviour and appearance. In addition to this, there is the issue of age: according to Western cultural norms, "girl" is a gendered identity that is temporally limited. "Girlhood" gives way to adulthood, or more correctly, to

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"womanhood," which is similarly gendered. Finally, we get to the question of identification and agency: perhaps it is better to say that a girl is a girl because she identifies in this way and because she has agency to do so.

As Gonick suggests, responding to the marginality of the queer girl involves "more than simply adding Queer girls" into this existing cultural category ("Sugar and Spice" 122). Rather, we must adopt new critical stances to "ask how girls become girls and to investigate the implications for those whose social, cultural, sexual and aesthetic practices position them outside the normative meanings of the term" ("Sugar and Spice" 122). Analysing the protocols that have rendered queer girls incoherent within broader fields of investigation is a necessary starting point for the development of more sophisticated understandings of queer girls, as figures within scholarship and in their represented form.

The overwhelming lack of scholarship on queer girls from those researching girl culture, queer representation and teen screen medias suggests to me two things. Firstly, that the majority of scholarship in these fields does not seem to understand the critical potential of *queer girlhood*. Secondly, a contentious claim: that without such an understanding, researchers are unable to catch up with the breadth of queer representation. In locating the absence of queer girls in the fields of both girls and queer studies, I hope to draw attention to the following: that as a rhetorical figure, the queer girl has the capacity to disrupt long-held views about not only what it means to be a girl, but also what it means to be queer. With sophisticated theorising, the queer girl could help illuminate the pluralities of these categories. In represented form, queer girls also challenge the established queer canon, enabling a means of rethinking of what "queer cinema" or "queer television" might come to look like.

Girls

Prior to feminist interventions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, much of what was known about youth came from male scholars studying male subjects. Girls were considered unimportant and passive figures: girl culture both frivolous and superficial. In the late 1970s Angela McRobbie helped to change the conversation by viewing girls as active cultural consumers and producers. Her early work, published as a book in 1991, brought together feminist and cultural theories with the intention of shifting the emphasis of cultural studies of youth "away from an almost exclusive interest in boys … to see how teenage girls interpreted some of the struc-

tural determinations of age, class, and gender in the context of their own lived experiences" (Feminism and Youth Culture, x). From the field of psychology, Carol Gilligan also made a significant contribution to girls' studies during this early period, rejecting studies of youth identity and adolescent development that centred on boys, including the work of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Erik Erikson. In the pioneering book, *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan argued that "women's development arises from the difference observed in their experiences of relationships" and that young girls also discuss the resolution of moral dilemmas "in a different voice" than do young boys (*Different Voice* 24). While Gilligan's research was criticised for a number of reasons, she was among the first to consider the developmental experiences of adolescent girls. Along with McRobbie, Gilligan paved the way for a growing number of feminist scholars to focus on the experience and representation of girlhood.

As girls' studies developed throughout the 1980s into the first peak of 1990s, the field continued to reflect the concerns of its two predecessors. The 1990s, in particular, saw large increases in both academic studies of adolescent girls' development and news articles that pointed out the problems facing contemporary girls in relation to media and popular culture. Studies of this period constructed "girls *themselves* as a social problem" with the overwhelming message that this group was in a state of crisis (Mazzarella & Pecora, "Girls in Crisis" 21). Considering adolescent girls as victims of society, many academic studies of girls throughout the 1990s focused on issues of school performance and self-esteem. During the early 2000s, this crisis discourse continued as the popular film *Mean Girls* (dir. Mark Waters, 2004) prompted a concern about the "mean girl" phenomenon. Gonick explains that this particular crisis of girlhood/girls' studies was linked to a more general "public anxiety and cultural fascination with girls and girlhood" ("The 'mean girl' crisis" 395). Since this point, feminist theorists and researchers have created an expanse of texts devoted to the study of girls and subsequently located girlhood as an important discursive site. More recently, the area of girls' studies has developed as a critical-theoretical field that unifies scholarship on the lived experiences of girls with scholarship examining how girls are discursively constructed through media texts.

Similar to girls' studies, feminist screen scholarship has attempted to shift discourse on teen film and television away from an early emphasis on masculinity that is best articulated within David Considine's influential history of youth in cinema, *The Cinema of Adolescence,* published in 1985.

While some accounts of the teen genre have examined the representation of girls, analysis of female figures has typically been limited in comparison to discussion of boys. Countering teen screen criticism's emphasis on male subjectivity, a number of publications have focused exclusively on the representation of girls in film and television. For instance, in the mid-1990s Carol Clover's *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film,* published in 1992, influenced film studies to look at the "final girl" of the horror genre in order to discuss girlhood in the cinema. Advancing this focus on the girl figure, Sarah Hentges' *Pictures of Girlhood: Images of Modern Female Adolescence on Film* published in 2006, addressed key themes for girls within a number of popular coming-of-age films. In this work, Hentges considered how teen film can be viewed as "a vehicle of cultural meaning … a powerful determinant of social, cultural and economic realities" with specific focus on the cultural construction of girlhood (10). This perspective was also taken up within *Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood* edited by Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance in 2002 and Roz Kaveney's *Teen Dreams: Reading Teen Film and Television from* Heathers *to* Veronica Mars, published in 2006, which have both helped to shift the emphasis of teen screen criticism from studies of young boys to studies of girlhood.

In many ways, this scholarship is concerned with the question of "why girls matter"; however, its central rhetorical figure, the "girl," is shaped by a pervasive set of norms. As Anita Harris argues, the category of "girl" has proven to be "slippery and problematic" because:

> It has been shaped by norms about race, class and ability that have prioritised the white, middle class and non-disabled, and pathologised and/or othered the majority outside this category of privilege. (*All About the Girl* xx)

This argument is made more compelling when considering how girlhood is constructed through popular teen cinema, particularly in a Western context. Girlhood, or perhaps more correctly female adolescence, has been the focus of many feature films and, as Gateward and Pomerance argue, "for the most part … the female subject is an exemplification—often through exaggeration—of hegemonic attitudes and values about girlhood" (14).

Though teen cinema has long represented girls and girl culture, there is a famous shot from the phenomenally successful *Mean Girls* that proves to be an apt synecdoche for girlhood as it is constructed through millennial teen cinema. From within a busy school hallway, a long shot tracks three popular girls walking through the crowds. An outsider, a girl who

just wants to fit in, flanks them. As the camera follows the girls, each one is revealed through a sea of adolescent bodies. Through this, they are positioned as teen celebrities and objects of desire; they are affluent, beautiful and dressed in pink trimmed dresses; adolescent male (and female) figures watch them as they confidently move through the school space. These girls are an image of white, middle-class America, and each one stands in for a particular character type that appears again and again in the teen genre. Rosalind Wiseman, author of the book on which the film was based, aptly describes these characters in the title of the work, *Queen Bees and Wannabes* While representing the ideal of girlhood, this shot also illuminates something of the fragility of this image, as the outsider (Lindsay Lohan) eventually trips and falls into a rubbish bin. Despite this, the image remains pervasive. In April 2014, *Rolling Stone* commemorated the 10-year anniversary *Mean Girls* by publishing a list of the "10 Best Teen-Girl Movies." Though the fragility of girlhood is considered within some of these films, all were produced within the USA, all featured a conventionally attractive heterosexual protagonist which, in most cases, was represented within a white middle-class milieu (Fig. 2.1).

Fig. 2.1 As in *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004), popular and academic discourse constructs girlhood through a narrow frame of reference. In this shot, the teenage girls are individually revealed by the camera and positioned as celebrities

Some films and television series do challenge this, including those from other national contexts. The construction of the "girl" as a white, middle-class figure is, of course, challenged by films that explicitly aim to diversify girlhood as a category (a notable recent example being Céline Sciamma's *Girlhood* [2014]). Yet the teen genre—typically constructed by popular and academic discourse as a US genre—overwhelmingly deals with issues of girlhood through a narrow frame of reference. Girlhood spans the high school years; girls are white, middle-class, slender and able-bodied, feminine in appearance and dress. They typically aspire to beauty, popularity and successful heterosexual romance. Exploring just this, Alison Bain posits that Hollywood perpetuates an oversimplified image of girlhood through the representation of white female adolescent characters. This echoes a similar argument to that of Gonick, who emphasises that:

> Far too often when the category 'girl' is named, in the media, in feminist research, in education, sociology, and psychology discourses, and in popular culture amongst other sites, it is white, middle-class, and heterosexual girls whose experiences are referenced. ("Sugar and Spice" 122)

What scholars such as Gonick and Bain emphasise is that representation alone is not responsible for the narrow definitions of girlhood that circulate within contemporary discourse. Rather, the cultural category of "girl" is discursively shaped. Scholarship *and* representation contribute to the perpetuation of norms that limit how "girls" and "girlhood" are understood.

While inroads are slowly being made into broadening girlhood studies, the field remains plagued by heteronormativity. For instance, exemplary texts by Heidi Safia Mirza, Bonnie Leadbeater & Niobe Way, Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey & June Melodey, Julie Bettie and Kyra D. Gaunt have explored intersections between class, race and gender. Yet sexuality is one area of girls' intersectional identities that remains largely unquestioned. More recently, researchers such as Usha Rodrigues & Belinda Smaill, Jennifer Helgren & Colleen Vasconcellos, Catherine Driscoll and Timothy Shary & Alexandra Seibel have begun to challenge the cultural biases of both girls' studies and teen cinema studies by internationalising the genre and foregrounding the experiences and representation of girls from non-Western cultures. Yet studies of queer girls in these same contexts remain few and far between.

Granted, some scholars *have* attempted to challenge the narrow understandings of "girl" by broadening their definitions around issues of sexuality. Though they are a minority within larger fields of study that universalise

the "girl" as a heterosexual figure, scholars such as Susan Driver and Fran Martin answer a decisive "yes" to Gonick's question "Are Queer girls, girls?" To consider this question further, and to provide a theoretical starting point for elaborating the specific media and examples in the following chapters, I must here reassert Gonick's argument. It is not enough to simply add queer girls to an existing category of girlhood. This is not an adequate means of challenging the protocols that limited our definitions in the first place. To consider the critical significance of the queer girl as a rhetorical and represented figure, "girlhood" itself must be theorised in queer ways.

Queer/Girl Theory

To question how heteronormative ideologies have come to define "girl," girlhood itself must be approached through an alternative critical framework. Queer theory is especially suited to this task, as its main project is a broad critique of normative models of sex, gender and sexuality. While this field has roots in gay and lesbian activism and criticism, Teresa de Lauretis actually first united the terms "queer" and "theory" in order to "mark a certain critical distance" from the phrase "lesbian and gay," which she understood as having become "the standard way of referring to what only a few years ago used to be simply 'gay' … or just a few years earlier still, 'homosexual'" ("Queer Theory" v, iv). According to de Lauretis, the term "lesbian and gay" had come to designate "distinct kinds of life-styles, sexualities, sexual practises, communities, issues, publications, and discourses" ("Queer Theory" v). Drawing attention to this, de Lauretis argued that queer theory could pose a challenge to stable "lesbian and gay" identity categories. This new theoretical paradigm, she argued, had the potential to act as a strategy allowing for the possibility "not to adhere to any one of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to transgress and transcend them—or at the very least problematise them" (de Lauretis, "Queer Theory" v).

Like girls' studies, queer theory was further developed as a resistant strategy throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Queer theory is typically pitted against heterosexual ideology, and has also been considered a means of resisting "homo-norms" as de Lauretis intended. The paradigm now involves both queer readings of texts and the theorisation of "queerness." This latter project is typified within Annamarie Jagose critical introduction to "queer" in which she positions queerness as "very much a category in the process of formation" (1). However, Jagose argues that this is not to

say that queer is on a linear path to formation, "to solidify into some form of consistency," but rather that "the definitional indeterminacy" of queer is one of its essential characteristics (1). Jagose, like many queer scholars, works with the assumption that queer is "a zone of possibilities" that is always "inflected by a sense of potentiality that it cannot quite articulate" (Edelman, *Homographesis* 114; Jagose 3). It is not my intention to narrate the development of this field of scholarship from its inception in 1990 to its contemporary uses. I believe there are a number of existing publications that do a thorough job of articulating the complexities of this field as it has developed over time. Rather than articulating what queer theory *is*, I am more concerned with what queer theory *does*: what "queer" as a critical concept might offer for theorisation of the queer girl.

As I have earlier noted, recent queer scholarship has linked queer theory to questions of temporality, drawing attention to "the logic of (hetero) sexual ideology as it shapes our pervasive understandings of politics, temporality, and social relations" (Edelman, *Antagonism* 821). This critical approach seems to be perfectly suited to explore issues of adolescence, girls and girlhood, three interconnected categories that are dramatically shaped by normative understandings of temporality and identity. Yet there are only a small number of scholars that even consider theorising around a non-adult subject. One of these is Stockton, who centralises childhood because she considers it a queer site, exploring its critical potential through her bold argument that "every child is queer" (3). This argument is echoed by cultural theorist Catherine Driscoll, who argues that all girls are queer because adolescent femininity has come to signify the unstable edges of post/modern selfhood. Driscoll locates the girl as a site where the self is represented in transition, describing this figure as "encompassing no specific age group but rather an idea of mobility preceding the fixity of womanhood and implying an unfinished process of personal development" (*Girls* 47). Explaining this further, she writes that "non-fixity" is "proper to feminine adolescence as a sign of both incompletion and promise, a figure that presents the girl as permanently queer" (*Girls* 160). While this is an intriguing argument, Driscoll only touches on it, leaving it somewhat underdeveloped in relation to girls' diverse sexual subjectivities.

The efficacy of queer theory lies in its capacity for resistance: to normativity, to rigid binaries, to linearity, to solidification. Yet because queer theory is bound up in rejecting normative binaries of sexuality and gender, it has very little to say about what it means to be a queer

girl. Stemming from queer theory's anti-foundational, anti-identitarian, anti-normative basis, this lack of a definition leads me to an important critique: that queer theory often erases difference, constructing a universal subject.

While lesbian-feminist critiques of queer theory were posed throughout the 1990s, nowhere is this more apparent than in Suzanna Danuta Walters' essay "From here to queer" published in 1996. In this essay, Walters critiques the concept of "queer" because she argues that it often "erases lesbian specificity and the enormous difference that gender makes, evacuates the importance of feminism, and rewrites the history of lesbian feminism and feminism generally" (12). Walters contends that while queerness "is theorised as somehow beyond gender" as "a sort of transcendent polymorphous perversity," this "forgets the very real and felt experiences of gender that women, particularly, live with quite explicitly" (13). Beyond this, Walters argues that "in a culture in which male is the default gender, in which *homosexual* (a term that also does not specify gender) is all too often imaged as a male and *gay* as both, to see queer as somehow gender *neutral* is ludicrous and wilfully naive" (14). This is because, she asserts, despite claims otherwise, "queer discourse sets up a universal (male) subject, or at least a universal gay male subject as its implicit referent" (15).

Aside from this fervent moment of 1990s discourse, it does seem that in relation to issues of gender, queer theory and politics are still, at times, "informed by, and inform, an overly simplistic definition between what or who is deemed to be queer, and what or who is not" (N. Sullivan 48). While lesbian-feminist critiques of queer theory do challenge the absence of women within queer paradigms, the issue of age has largely been left untouched. That is, as Susan Driver argues, "within scholarly discourses, the pairing of the words *queer* and *girl* remains virtually unthinkable" (28, emphasis original). This is, I believe, because of queer theory's resistance to solidified categories of identification, which means that Gonick's question "Are Queer girls, girls?" registers only as a syntax error. For this reason, then, I think that queer theory is best employed in conjunction with other fields of enquiry. By placing queer theory in tentative conversation with a field such as girls' studies, I hope to maintain the political efficacy of queer while attending to the specificities of girls' represented experience, identity and culture. In doing so, I argue that it is possible to locate the critical significance of the queer girl as a rhetorical or discursive figure. The queer qualities of this figure can denaturalise "girl" by opening

up questions about how girlhood is discursively constructed. However, the "girlness" of this figure is just as important. It provides an anchor to the queer project, allowing it to orbit a point of specificity. The queer girl, then, prompts two key questions: What does it mean to be a girl? And, what does it mean to be queer? With proper theorising, I believe the queer girl could help to illuminate the pluralities of both of these categories. What is needed, then, is a means of teasing out the correspondences between these questions, a means of queering girls' studies and "girling" queer studies.

Queering Girls' Studies, "Girling" Queer Studies: The Critical Potential of In-Between

> As a researcher, trouble comes when trying to bridge fields of academic work on girls, queers, and popular cultures. There are very few developed points of correspondence through which to launch a theoretical discussion. Knowing this has plagued me … as I try to integrate girl studies and queer theories, both of which have almost nothing explicitly to say about being female, young and queer. (Driver, Queer Girls and Popular Culture 29)

Early on in *Queer Girls and Popular Culture*, Driver makes this comment as she discusses the process of developing a critical approach to understanding the queer girl. Though I have encountered similar difficulties in attempting to bridge these disparate fields, I believe there is much to be gained from queering girls' studies (or perhaps "girling" queer studies). Bringing the "girl" into a queer paradigm means that we can consider how queerness is embodied in specific ways, while queering the "girl" enables further redefinition of this category. No longer limited by chromosomes, social or culturally gendered identities, or by temporality, *queer* girlhood itself is open for interpretation, for identification, for contestation.

So "are queer girls, girls?" A simple answer is yes, but perhaps it is more productive to consider the space in-between queerness and girlhood, especially when these categories are thrust together. The "in-between" is best defined through Victor Turner's concept of liminality, which proves to be a helpful conceptual tool in this instance because it enables these diverse discourses to be pivoted around the issue of temporality. It does

so because liminality refers to a *temporary* period of transition between certain points in age or social position:

> These are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*—the Latin for threshold, signifying the great importance of real or symbolic …), and reaggregation. (*Dramas* 231)

According to Turner, during this transitory, in-between period, the state of the participant becomes "ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification" (*Dramas* 232).

This in-between moment is prime fodder for films and television series that routinely valorise the liminal period through coming-of-age narratives in which adolescent protagonists are matured via a series of personal trials. Such protagonists enter the narrative as immature adolescents and leave with new levels of maturity, after crossing a threshold between adolescence and adulthood. Discussing this in relation to the teen genre, film theorist Adrian Martin argues that:

> In one way or another, most teen stories are about what cultural theorists call the liminal experience: that intense, suspended moment between yesterday and tomorrow, between childhood and adulthood, between being a nobody and a somebody, when everything is in question, and anything is possible. (68)

In their introduction to *Geographies of Girlhood: Identities In-between*, Pamela Bettis and Natalie Adams similarly link adolescence to liminality, arguing that the concept "opens up different ways to think about these in-between spaces and places of female adolescent identity" (6). To link liminality to the figure of the girl is to return to Gilligan's early research on young women and explore the "crossroads" of life or, perhaps better put, to the moments in between childhood and adulthood. It also is to consider the category "girl" through notions of human development and to question the point when girlhood ends and womanhood begins. But what does it mean to consider queerness and the queer girl through this lens?

Within a queer paradigm, the concept of liminality can be mobilised as a resistance to heteronormativity. As Elisa Abes and David Kasch note, heteronormativity creates a binary of two fixed sexualities: heterosexuality

and non-heterosexuality. As liminality represents "a state of flux between two distinct and stable stages of being," one might understand it as a "resistant strategy in which elements of heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality are incorporated into one identity that rejects normalised definitions of either heterosexuality or non-heterosexuality" (Abes & Kasch 621). To paraphrase, Abes and Kasch argue that the notion of liminality as resistance facilitates notions of flexible sexualities and provides a framework for understanding the multiplicity of ways in which an individual can perform sexuality in resistance to heteronormativity.

However, it is important to remember that Turner's theorisation of liminality "represents the midpoint in a status-sequence between two positions" and thus requires a "cultural assurance of a final stable resolution" of the ambiguity that defines the liminal period (*Dramas* 237, 233). Thus, to consider queerness through this filter would be to position it as an ambiguous midpoint between the stable identity categories of heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality. Yet this view is problematic, as it is based on the assurance that the ambiguous period must eventually be recuperated into a position of stability. What this returns us to is both Adrienne Rich's concept of "compulsory heterosexuality" as well as those heteronormative developmental models of adolescence, outlining homosexuality as a temporary phase. I am not raising this point in order to propose that we consider "queer" sexuality as a midpoint between homosexuality and heterosexuality, or as a temporary aberration in normative sexual development. I do want to draw attention to the ways that contemporary screen media routinely represents the queer girl in this manner, depicting queerness as an interruption in a developmental teleology of heterosexual maturity. As a figure constructed by screen media, the queer girl is thoroughly in-between—liminal in age, but also in sexuality. Temporality is thus a key feature of queer girlhood as it has been represented through millennial screen media, and queer screen criticism may help to illuminate this further.

It is important to distinguish between gay and lesbian approaches to screen media and those motivated by queerer ideologies. The former is represented by two early texts. The first of these is Parker Tyler's *Screening the Sexes,* published in 1973. This work focuses on concealed homosexual symbolism and representations of gays and lesbians in both Hollywood and avant-garde cinema. The second is Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality and the Movies,* published in 1981, which aims to "unveil the 'big lie' that lesbians and gay men do not exist and to expose

the rampant homophobia that kept homosexuality in the closet both on and off the screen" (Smelik, "Gay and lesbian criticism" 135). These two texts were the first to examine the representation of homosexuality within cinematic spaces and their focus on the stereotyping of gay and lesbian characters was a watershed moment for gay and lesbian film criticism. Along with many contemporary texts, they both focus on the stereotyping of adult gay and lesbian characters. In an article in *Jump Cut* in 1978, Richard Dyer's assessment of this kind of criticism, I believe, marks the tentative beginning of an important move towards "queer" film criticism—though "queer" as a critical concept had yet to gain traction. In this seminal text, Dyer argues that:

> Since the gay movement began we have insisted on the centrality of the media (understood in its widest sense) as a carrier, reinforcer or shaper of our oppression. Sometimes we have gone overboard in blaming the mass media—they are only one of the instruments of oppression. More important, we have tended to condemn images of gayness in the name of aesthetic concepts and values that are highly problematic. We've tended to demand that gay characters and themes be represented according to certain ideas and ideals about what art is, without seeing that such ideas and ideals are *straight* ones, not neutral or transparent but imbued with a sexual ideology that has anti-gayness as one of its cornerstones. (Dyer, "Gays in film" par. 1, emphasis original)

While gay and lesbian criticism seems based in visibility politics and demands positive representation, for queer film criticism this is simply not enough. Rather, the work of the queer film critic, argues Dyer, is to link aesthetics to political analysis and question how the given aesthetic principles of cinema "in however ambiguous a way, [are] also principles of heterosexual hegemony" (Dyer, "Gays in film" par. 1).

For scholars and filmmakers critiquing this "heterosexual hegemony," the term "queer" has been employed in a variety of ways in relation to screen media, though it most commonly refers to a movement within independent filmmaking called New Queer Cinema. Coined by B. Ruby Rich in 1992, this movement emerged with a group of surprisingly popular films of the 1991 and 1992 Sundance Film Festival. These included Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning* (1990), Todd Haynes' *Poison* (1991) and Tom Kalin's *Swoon* (1992), three films often cited as beginning this movement. The same queer aesthetics can also be located in *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991), *Young Soul Rebels* (Isaac Julien, 1991),

R.S.V.P. (Laurie Lynd, 1991), *Edward II* (Derek Jarman, 1991), *Khush* (Pratibha Parmar, 1991), *The Hours and Times* (Christopher Münch, 1991), and *The Living End* (Greg Araki, 1992) as well as experimental works by Sadie Benning, Su Friedrich, Cecilia Dougherty and Monica Treut. As Michele Aaron highlights, these films have come to form an established queer canon and aesthetic attitude. However, the term "queer" is also employed on a very broad level by scholars, critics and filmmakers who utilise it as a synonym for gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans screen media, that is, for films, videos and television series about queer experience.

Though films representing queer girls can fit into the established queer canon, they are most often situated within the broader category exploring "queer experience." *Lost and Delirious* (dir. Léa Pool, 2001), *Cruel Intentions* (dir. Roger Kumble, 1999), and *The Runaways* (dir. Floria Sigismondi, 2010) are good examples of this. But this does not mean that these films do not put hegemonic attitudes into question. By illuminating how "heterosexual hegemony" comes to influence cultural understanding of girlhood and sexuality, these works (among many others) take on a queer project. In doing so, they offer a challenge to the established canon and encourage a rethink of what counts as "queer cinema," where popular teen cinema can be thought of alongside the critically acclaimed films of Todd Haynes, Greg Araki, Sadie Benning and Su Friedrich.

For girl characters in particular, heterosexual hegemonic ideologies are reflected in the varying ways that queerness is represented as a temporary phase entered into during a liminal period of adolescence. In this period, queer desire is often represented as acceptable practice for heterosexual desire. The two lovers in *Lost and Delirious* who are caught kissing by their roommate who "thought they were just practising for boys" succinctly illustrate this, as does the infamous kiss between Sarah Michelle Gellar and Selma Blair in *Cruel Intentions* (Fig. 2.2). In other films such as *Thirteen* and *The Runaways*, sex between two girls is excused by intoxication. In these representations, queerness is rendered both transient and untimely, as queer experience is fueled by drugs and alcohol and typically exists only for the duration of the high. In each of these films, queerness lasts only for the duration of adolescent liminality. It is an unruly time but when the liminal period ceases, both normality and heterosexuality are restored.

Queer romance is also something that older women remember nostalgically via what Martin describes as a "memorial mode of representation" within Chinese-language depictions of the queer girl, ensuring

Fig. 2.2 In *Cruel Intentions* (Roger Kumble, 1999) queer desire is represented as acceptable practice for heterosexual desire

that queerness can only ever exist in the past. However, in television this typical representation of queerness as a fleeting moment is even more pronounced. Television's queer girls often appear for a few episodes as a narrative complication before departing soon after. And in series such as the Australian soap *Neighbours*, the queer dalliance is never spoken of again. The second season of the US teen drama series *The O.C.* articulates this in a single scene: Marissa Cooper's mother Julie discusses her daughter's sexuality with her neighbour, Kirsten Cohen. Kirsten quells Julie's anxieties about the situation, suggesting it is just a phase: "After all, it was for me," Julie ultimately declares. This conversation is never revisited. In most of these examples, the end of the "queer phase" of interruption is marked by a coming-of-age moment when one character decides that queerness is no longer appropriate or that it is time to "grow up" and get a boyfriend. As Driver writes: "A brief shy kiss, a tomboy transgression, an 'innocent' crush, and playful flirtations are often valued only as temporary departures from a normative course toward feminine heterosexual adulthood" (*Queer Girls* 7).

As these examples demonstrate, within screen media the queer girl must eventually "grow up" and queerness—embodied in this figure—is subsequently temporalised as "a passing phase." As I identify in each of the following chapters, queerness is rendered as a temporary narrative complication

within short televisual narratives, represented through nostalgically lost love that exists only in the past, and is depicted as a means of rebelling or experimenting in the face of monotonous teenage boredom. Through these dominant narratives, echoing the structuring logics of heteronormative temporality, the queerness of the queer girl is thus rendered a fleeting moment and a glimpse of an elsewhere.

CHAPTER 3

Serialising the Queer Girl in *Sugar Rush* and *Skins*

In January 2011, the US edition of *Entertainment Weekly* featured a special dossier on the representation of queer characters on teen television, in which reporter Jennifer Armstrong identified a significant shift in the representation of queer youth. Examining a number of US representations from the 1990s to the 2010s, Armstrong ultimately argued that "gay characters have gone from one-time guest stars, whispered tragedies, and silly sidekicks to not just an accepted but an *expected* part of teen centric television" (36, emphasis original). Millennial teen television was, according to Armstrong, especially apt for the representation of queer youth. Yet studies of this newly *expected* representation reveal a different story. Namely, that teen television's queer characters function almost exclusively within a particular narrative form: the coming-out narrative. Whether focusing on a character actively "coming out" of the proverbial closet, or being "outed" against their will, this narrative emphasises the climactic revelation of non-heterosexuality in a manner that has led some critics to question whether queerness can ever exist as anything else. To examine this claim further, it is necessary to investigate just how queerness is represented through the medium and its particular narrative forms.

To these points, then, this chapter is animated by a number of key questions about queer girls and teen television: How have queer girls been represented in millennial teen television? Do teen series dominantly centralise the process of coming-out to the exclusion of other possible storylines? If so, what are the implications of this? How does the integration of

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televisual seriality come to impact these representations? Responding to these questions throughout this chapter, I explore the way that queerness is figured as "a passing phase" through particular plot devices and narrative forms including the coming-out narrative. Then, I examine two case studies to illuminate how two unique British series challenge this dominant depiction of the queer girl. Through close analysis of *Sugar Rush* and *Skins*, I explore how the integration of televisual seriality elongates the time of the queer girl beyond "a passing phase" of adolescence. These are exemplary texts, though it must be noted that my discussion here is limited to Western television. This is partly because of issues related to access: while queer girls have been represented in television across both Europe and Asia in recent years, these representations are either not available on DVD or, when they are, do not contain English subtitles.

Teen TV's Transitory Queer Girls

Broadly speaking, teen television is associated with adolescent concerns and/or the teenage audience, with genre-specific storylines focusing on the issues faced by teenage coming-of-age characters. These storylines typically involve questions of liminality, self and identity, and gender and sexuality, as well as issues around race, place and community. Sharon Marie Ross and Louisa Ellen Stein note that a wide range of texts can be considered as teen television, "from programs nominally about teens but directed at older audiences to programs not defined as teen but featuring teen characters, themes and concerns" (5). Often foregrounding a high-school setting, teen television focuses on the concerns of its adolescent characters within a unique format that combines the traditional episodic series with the elongated storylines of television's serial form. Typically, this means that some storylines are resolved at the end of individual episodes, while others are developed into longer, more complex story arcs that narrativise the fraught process of growing up.

Though teen television is overwhelmingly nostalgic (a result of being written, produced and directed by adults), its broad focus on teenage characters approaching adulthood means that the genre is best described as forward- or future-oriented. This focus is especially so for queer characters, who are now taught to face adversity through future-orientation via the It Gets Better Project, launched in 2010. Within many teen series, however, coming of age is positioned as a narrative end—quite simply, teen characters do not have much to do once they grow up. Thus,

while teen television as a genre looks to the future, it always centralises an ambiguous in-between moment of adolescence. In writing about teen cinema, Adrian Martin argues that the teen genre best captures "the liminal experience: that intense, suspended moment between yesterday and tomorrow, between childhood and adulthood, between being a nobody and a somebody, when everything is in question, and anything is possible" (68). It is through this unique perspective that the teen genre can be, as David Oswell suggests, "ironic, critical and sassy" while also functioning, as Caralyn Bolte has argued, as a "means to interrogate contemporary cultural ideologies" (Oswell 44; Bolte 94). Emphasising these qualities, Davis argues that the teen genre holds "great promise" for screening "lives, desires and issues that are often ignored, stymied or cursorily treated by television (and other media)" including those of the queer teen (131).

Yet critics have not always been so optimistic about the potential of television to depict queer adolescents. Historically, the representation of queer sexuality has been limited to adult characters, "most of whom remain in the closet until their late twenties/early thirties" (Tropiano, *The Primetime Closet* 154–155). As Rebecca Beirne notes, for many years queer audiences rarely saw themselves on television and "when they did, it was usually as monsters or victims, objects of revulsion or pity. Or perhaps as a once-off 'lesson' in tolerance, never to be heard from again" (*A Critical Introduction* 2).

During the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, primetime television rarely explicitly depicted adolescent homosexuality. When the subject was explored, it was limited to medical dramas "focusing on heterosexual teens undergoing a sexual identity crisis" (Tropiano, *The Primetime Closet* 155). Throughout the 1980s, as Stephen Tropiano notes, dramatic series and made-for-TV films began to explore teen sexuality and that "while some teens, mostly females, are left feeling confused after engaging in a little same-sex foreplay (like kissing and hugging), others realise that their attraction to members of the same sex is not simply a phase they'll outgrow" (*The Primetime Closet* 160). Tropiano's analysis highlights that television's female characters are overwhelmingly represented through narratives of sexual confusion, while it is adolescent boys who come to realise they will not outgrow their homosexual feelings. In the typical confusion narrative, girl characters become anxious after questioning their sexuality, while guidance is offered by adult figures who reiterate the message that "sexual experiment is a healthy, normal part of an adolescent or young girl's sexual development," (Tropiano, *The Primetime Closet* 161).

Tracing this confusion narrative through representations of the 1990s, both Ron Becker and Tropiano locate the emergence of the "gay kiss" as a plot device and the "three episode story arc" about confused sexuality (Becker, *Gay TV* 136–189; Tropiano, *The Primetime Closet* 162). Later in the 1990s, Tropiano argues, these stock devices began to be replaced as a small number of teen drama series included gay or lesbian characters with storylines revolving "around a gay teen who has accepted the fact that he/she is gay and is now ready to come out to a close friend or family member" (*The Primetime Closet* 168). Of this content, a compelling argument is made by Alfred P. Kielwasser and Michelle A. Wolf, who contend that queer teenage characters are symbolically annihilated from televisual spaces through "spirals of silence" that present a "ubiquitous, consonant, cumulative" message "that only heterosexual adolescents matter, only heterosexual 'coming of age' rituals are acceptable and communicable" (359). This routine annihilation of queer adolescents is especially significant, as Kielwasser and Wolf argue, because it suggests "that homosexuality is an adult characteristic, something one 'becomes'" (359). Though Kielwasser and Wolf make this claim in the early 1990s—a time when there were very few representations of queer youth—it is worth considering this argument in relation to more recent representations of queer girls. How does it hold up to contemporary television?

While the Canadian teen series *Degrassi Junior High* first introduced its audience to issues of teen homosexuality in the late 1980s, the ongoing representation of queer girls is unique to millennial television. In the early 2000s, the queer girl became a recognisable figure within television across the globe. A key text in this early period is the supernatural teen series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) which featured an ongoing relationship between young witches Willow (Alyson Hannigan) and Tara (Amber Benson) from 2000 to 2002. Though I have trouble including these characters as queer girls because they began their relationship in college, this representation has been identified by critics including Driver, Edwina Bartlem and Jes Battis as one of the more positive teenage lesbian storylines. The early 2000s also saw queer girls represented in a number of popular Western teen series as well as a small group of Taiwanese television series and telemovies. These included *The Unfilial Daughter/Ninü* in 2001, telemovies *The Maiden's Dance/Tongnü zhi wu* and *Voice of Waves/Nanian xiatiande langsheng* in 2002, and the 16-episode drama series *Love's Lone Flower/Gu lian hua* in 2005, which was later adapted to film.

In Western television, many representations of the early 2000s characterised queerness as "a passing phase" of both adolescence and television. Although earlier representations such as *Degrassi Junior High* introduced queer-themed storylines in the format of the "very special episode" which treated sexuality as an issue to be dealt with, representations from the early 2000s extended this to the multiple episode story arc. For instance, while teenage characters Jessie (Evan Rachel Wood) and Katie (Mischa Barton) had a romantic storyline spanning several episodes on US drama series *Once and Again* (1999–2002) in 2002, in 2004, the typically conservative Australian soap *Neighbours* featured a brief but controversial "passing phase" storyline between schoolgirls Sky and Lana. Later in 2004, the US *One Tree Hill* (2003–present) featured a storyline wherein Anna, the queer girl character, deliberated over her sexuality and was written out immediately after declaring that she was gay. At the beginning of 2005, a similarly short storyline appeared on the popular US series *The O.C.* as key character Marissa began a short relationship with Alex, manager of the local bar. Within these texts, a new character is introduced to an established milieu, they cross paths with a conventionally attractive, female protagonist (who is usually involved in a heterosexual relationship) and both parties realise that they are attracted to one another. The established girl character explores this attraction to the newbie, but ultimately decides to remain with the heterosexual partner. The queer dalliance is written off as "a passing phase" or experiment and the new characters are eventually written out—likely to be forgotten within the diegesis and themselves become "just a phase" within the televisual narrative more broadly. Thus, queer girls are constructed as a narrative complication; such figures appear only to disappear, and this disappearance occurs upon resolution of the brief storyline.

Midway through 2005, three teen series across the globe featured more prominent and ongoing queer girls. The first of these was *Sugar Rush* (2005–2006), which premiered in June 2005 on Channel 4 in the UK. This series was a teen dramedy about a "fifteen-year-old virgin" named Kim (Olivia Hallinan) who was "sexually obsessed" with her straight best friend, Sugar (Lenora Crichlow) (episode 1.1). *Sugar Rush* was broadcast in the UK between 2005 and 2006, and followed Kim's attempts to deal with her newfound desires as she adjusted to living in a new city with her eccentric family. In November 2005, just a few months later, *South of Nowhere* (2005–2008) premiered on the now defunct US tween network The N, which endeavoured to provide "an authentic voice for

teens to help them figure out their lives" (The N mission statement, qtd in Ross 61). This series was an ensemble drama that dealt with issues of racism, violence, bullying, drug abuse and most notably, teen homosexuality. *South of Nowhere* spanned three seasons from 2005 to 2008. The third series to represent an ongoing queer girl was Canada's *Degrassi: The Next Generation* (2001–present), which featured a romantic storyline between queen bee Paige (Lauren Collins) and bad girl Alex (Deanna Casaluce) from November 2005 until October 2007. All three of these series pushed the boundaries of traditional teen programming by placing queer female teenagers at the centre of their media landscapes, opening up new possibilities for queer teen representation. Following the success of these series was the UK drama series *Skins* (2007–2012), which premiered on youth channel E4 in 2007. *Skins* focused on generations of students at a fictional high school in Bristol, West England. Its first generation (seasons one and two, 2007–2008) featured a solitary queer boy while the second generation shifted this focus to a dyad of queer girl characters. This second generation, seen in seasons three and four (2009–2010), featured a prominent romantic storyline between Emily (Kathryn Prescott) and Naomi (Lily Loveless). Building on the success of this series, a US remake of *Skins* premiered on MTV in 2011. In this series, the queer boy character was reimaged as Tea, a lesbian with a storyline revolving entirely around her sexual experimentation with male characters. It was cancelled after ten episodes.

Towards the end of the 2000s, more series contributed to building the queer girl as a recognisable——though transient——figure. For instance, in 2008 a queer girl appeared within US series *Friday Night Lights* (2006–2011). In 2009, two Spanish series also introduced queer girls into their established storylines. In its third season, *Physics or Chemistry/Física o química* (*2008–2011*) presented its audiences with a bisexual character named Alma (Sandra Blázque) while a relationship was developed between Dani (Paula Cancio) and Sofia (Ana Fernández) on *Cuestión de Sexo* (2007–2009). In the UK, a romantic storyline was developed between Lydia (Lydia Kelly) and Sara (Loui Batley) on the long-running soap opera *Hollyoaks* (1995–present). This storyline continued until the end of 2010 when Lydia murdered Sara and then left the series shortly after. In the USA, *90210* (2008–2013) also featured a brief romantic storyline between girls in 2009. This consisted of a ten-episode story arc between Adrianna (Jessica Lowdnes) and Gia (Rumer Willis) in which Adrianna briefly questioned her sexuality before promptly returning to heterosexuality.

Around this time, teen musical *Glee* (2009–2015) emerged as a powerful pop-culture phenomenon. This popular mainstream series focused on a group of misfit Midwestern high school students. Thrusting traditional misfit characters into the mainstream and celebrating their difference, *Glee* featured several prominent queer teen storylines and emphasised its queer teen characters not just as major characters in an ensemble cast but rather as an ensemble in themselves (Monaghan "Coming out on US teen television"). In 2010, *Glee*'s cheerleaders Brittany (Heather Morris) and Santana (Naya Rivera) revealed their love for one another. Concurrently, another queer girl became central to US network television within the popular mystery series *Pretty Little Liars* (2010–present). Still airing, this series focuses on a group of teenage girls being terrorised by a mysterious figure who threatens to reveal their secrets. One of the primary characters, Emily (Shay Mitchell), had her sexuality revealed by the mystery figure in the first season.

Across the globe, the queer girl has continued to develop as a recognisable figure throughout the second decade of the millennial era. German soap opera *Hand aufs Herz* (2010–2011) featured an extended romantic storyline between Jenny (Lucy Scherer) and Emma (Kasia Borek), set against a backdrop of music and dance, while British soap *Coronation Street* (1960–present) introduced its first queer girl, Sophie (Brooke Vincent). This character first appeared in 1994 but her major storylines did not begin until 2006. In 2010 Sophie fell in love with her school friend Sian (Sacha Parkinson) and the two remained in a relationship until the end of 2011 when they broke up on their wedding day. Sian departed the series soon after. In the same year, a more promising storyline was developed on the eleventh season of Canadian series *Degrassi* between characters Fiona (Annie Clark) and Imogen (Cristine Prosperi) that lasted until June 2013, when Fiona graduated from high school and travelled overseas. Around this time, queer girls were also a notable addition to the Korean media landscape with the country's first lesbian drama *Daughters of Club Billitus/Clubbilitisui ddal deul*. However, it was a one-episode special.

It is worth pointing out that historical accounts of queer representation (including texts by Tropiano, Gross and Becker) are often grounded in visibility politics and are based, as Villarejo argues, on a "narrative of homosexual televisual evolution whereby the clandestine has yielded to the overt, the retrogressive has ceded to pride … and so forth" (3). While these studies can be drawn upon to good result, it is important to

note that we cannot and indeed should not explain queer representation (including that of the queer girl) via a steady narrative of progress. Lynne Joyrich poses a particularly good critique of visibility politics when she asserts that "our demands should not simply be for *more* (more queer characters, love stories, visibility). We also need to ask for something *different*" (141, emphasis original). This means moving beyond commenting on increases in representation or vague ideas of "complexity," to ask how queer girls are constructed through television and consider what this means for broader cultural understandings of girlhood, love, sex and growing up. That is, eschewing visibility politics in favour of an in-depth textual investigation into the ways that queer girls are temporalised as "a passing phase" within the teen genre.

Looking at these representations of queer girls from millennial teen series, it seems to me that the "passing phase" phenomenon occurs in three interconnected ways. The first two are identified by Tropiano in *The Primetime Closet*: They are the "gay kiss" and the brief narrative arc (162). Within both of these, queerness is depicted as a temporary aberration, an interruption to the heterosexual status quo. In many cases, the queer girl is depicted as a transitory figure that enters a televisual narrative only as a complication and then disappears after the storyline has been resolved. A key example of this occurred in the 2004 season of the long-running Australian soap opera *Neighbours* when Ramsay Street met its first lesbian character, Lana.

Introduced at the end of August 2004, Lana was presented as a character that had grown up in Canada. Because of her Canadian accent, she was, according to Beirne, "already positioned as 'other' to the existing characters" ("Screening the dykes of Oz" 28). Like most of television's queer teenagers, Lana initially hid her sexuality. However, as her storyline progressed, she developed feelings for her heterosexual best friend Sky. During a play-fight at a sleepover, she kissed Sky (Fig. 3.1) and this set her brief narrative arc in motion. As Beirne argues, the kiss between Lana and Sky was a "significant breakthrough in terms of lesbian representation on mainstream Australian television, considering *Neighbours*' 6.30 pm timeslot" ("Screening the dykes of Oz" 28). However, it did attract backlash from conservative viewers (Nguyen). Ultimately, though, it was problematic for another reason: the kiss was the catalyst for a storyline treating sexuality as a lesson for both its characters and its viewers. This storyline revolved entirely around the character's sexuality as a social problem. By her departure in January 2005, Lana had kissed a girl, been

Fig. 3.1 *Neighbours* (Reg Watson, 1985–present) brief coming out storyline began when Lana kissed her friend Sky at a sleepover

outed at school, been bullied and ostracised, attempted to have sex with a boy to stop the spread of rumours, accepted her sexuality, been kissed by her friend Sky and attended the school dance with a female date, before finally being accepted by her peers and promptly moving back to Canada. Just thinking about it is exhausting.

In an interview in the Melbourne newspaper *The Age*, the series' executive producer Rick Pellizzeri emphasised that Lana's sexuality was considered an issue to be dealt with, asserting that "in the last 18 months, we've tackled breast cancer, drug abuse, postnatal depression, infertility, stalking, behavioural problems for teenagers, police corruption … we are not condoning or promoting homosexuality … Ultimately we're telling a story about tolerance" (quoted in Nguyen 5). This sentiment was echoed by scriptwriter Helen McWhirter who noted that Lana "was introduced to the show as a means of addressing the issue of teenage homosexuality, and therefore only contracted for the duration of the story which unfolded over a few months" (quoted in Aaron). Lana's storyline was not intended to offer an ongoing representation of queer girlhood, but rather, was constructed to operate a key pedagogical role in *Neighbours* ongoing social-issue bingo.

While constructed around both a "gay kiss" and brief narrative arc, Lana's storyline also leads to the third way that queer girls are temporalised as "a passing phase" within contemporary television. The storyline was framed, primarily, as a coming-out story: a narrative through which Lana came to terms with her sexuality. However, this strategy is contradictory: while it should result in more opportunities for the representation of queer sexuality, it often operates in the opposite manner because it centralises the process of coming-out to the exclusion of other possible storylines. Ultimately, this limits the opportunity for queer representation. As Michaela Meyer discusses in relation to *One Tree Hill's* coming out narrative, "perhaps the most troublesome feature of the narrative is … [the queer girl's] eventual erasure from the text" ("I'm just trying to find my way" 248). Susan Driver discusses this particularly well when she argues that the coming out narrative routinely emphasises a "brief moment of visible difference," while simultaneously disavowing the possibility of the television narrative to "expand and contextualise [the] experiences" of being young and queer "beyond dramatic scenes of revelation" (58).

To explain how this occurs, it is worth considering this narrative in more detail. As a rite of passage, a personal-as-political action or gesture, a challenge to normative identity politics or simply the negotiation of "social boundaries that define both sex and sexuality," coming out is "embedded in the very structures of gay and lesbian culture" (Monaghan, "Coming Out and Coming of Age" 58; Bronski 20). To come out is to acknowledge one's romantic or sexual desires for the same sex, to claim the identity of being gay, lesbian, queer or any other form of non-heterosexuality, to act sexually on these desires and to publicly declare this identity (Bronski 20). In her influential essay "Epistemology of the console," Joyrich argues that the coming out narrative is one key strategy through which television comes to know sexuality. This is because all characters enter their respective narratives with an assumed heterosexuality.

While coming out is a complex internal process, its representation relies on external conflict (Bronski 21). This is typically achieved through verbal expression of sexual identity (a public or semi-public declaration) that is followed by a conflict that arises "between the gay person and her or his family or peer group" (Bronski 21). In contemporary teen film and television, this act of self-enunciation and the conflict that follows occupies a "pivotal position in the … narrativisation of queer adolescent subjectivity" (Davis 131). Captured in these moments of revelation, according to Davis, is often "the *first* experience of coming out, a self-conscious taking-on of

a new, specific identity" (131). Yet, as Gilad Padva argues, coming out is also routinely linked to coming of age, to the crossing of the threshold between adolescence and adulthood, and thus it is represented as "the only way for a queer teenager to achieve his/her personal, social, cultural and sexual liberation" (368). For film and television's queer teenagers, key coming of age milestones (for instance, graduating high school or having sex for the first time) are eschewed by the enunciation or public announcement of their sexual identity.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a number of critics including Dennis Allen and Anna McCarthy investigated the prevalence of the coming-out narrative on television. Exploring the relationship between this revelatory narrative and the ongoing seriality of television, these scholars concluded that the medium of television in "its institutionalised form is antipathetic or inimical to queerness" (Davis 129). Writing in the late 1990s, Allen outlines a case for this argument, contending that until the mid-1990s essentially only one homosexual storyline could occur in any heterosexually dominated series. It was, according to Allen, the "revelation of homosexuality," a storyline that suggested queer characters could only ever be active within coming-out narratives (610). In 2001, in an analysis of the 1990s sitcom *Ellen*, McCarthy argues that it is queerness itself that poses a problem for "the unfolding of [television's] temporal structures" (McCarthy 597). According to McCarthy, this problem lies in the "difficulty of making same-sex desire uneventful, serial, everyday" (McCarthy 609). Extending these arguments beyond the early 2000s, Davis significantly wonders if it is possible "to depict overt homosexuality in television drama as anything other than a revelation?" (128).

It may seem that much has changed in the years since these accounts, especially with the introduction of adult-oriented series such as *Queer as Folk*, *The L Word*, *The Real L Word*, and *Lip Service* as well as the teen series identified in this chapter, all of which routinely include "ongoing narrativisation" of queer/lesbian life (Davis & Needham 7). Kelly Kessler is one recent scholar who argues that writers have begun to present queer characters outside of the "very special episode" format. Kessler contends that queer characters have emerged across many television genres, with many of these being depicted just as "badly" (read: formulaically) as their heterosexual counterparts ("Narrative mediocrity" 139). Yet in a more recent article, Joyrich still locates 'queer TV' as a paradox, arguing that television has "been taken as the very determinant of the mainstream" and is overwhelmingly viewed as an everyday and ordinary media form

while queer "is defined precisely as the subversion of the ordinary, as the strange, the irregular" ("Queer Television Studies" 134). Discussing this, she questions:

> when LGBT folks 'make it' on television, streamed into the dominant currents within televisual flow, are they no longer quite queer, that 'mainstreaming' undoing the force of disruption and negativity that makes 'queerness' to begin with? ("Queer Television Studies" 134)

Importantly, Joyrich highlights that sexuality and textuality do not always align neatly, that *queer* as a noun does not necessarily equate to *queering* as a verb. With this in mind, it is perhaps more productive to question how television comes to know sexuality than it is to simply call for increases in representation.

Closer analysis of millennial representations of queer girlhood reveals that the brief confessional narrative continues to remain pervasive, particularly within the genre of teen television. As Davis and Needham discuss in the recent *Queer TV*: *Theories*, *histories*, *politics*: within the teen genre "the revelation of a character's homosexuality [often] quickly leads to narrative redundancy after said disclosure. Most of the gay and lesbian characters … have little to do after they come out, and more often than not they eventually get written out" (7). Davis and Needham further note that when queer characters do continue to appear in television narratives after coming out, "the fate of such characters is often to have the queer aspects of their lives (sex, love, queer friends and spaces, homophobia) elided" (7). This latter argument is perhaps best demonstrated by an article titled "In 2011, Queer girl television was almost awesome" on the lesbian popular culture website *Autostraddle*. In this article, published in early 2012, editor Marie Lyn Bernard (Riese) comments on the 2011 television season's influx of queer girls and queer women. "This season," she writes, "we were permitted to dream" (par. 4). Yet despite this optimism, Riese was eventually disappointed by all of these storylines, noting the way that each series desexualised their lesbian characters, sidelined them or killed them off. "So," Riese ultimately asked, "is it the nature of television and storytelling itself, or of queer women specifically, that our dreams were always dashed? That every single one of these storylines found a way to fuck or ignore us in the end?" (par. 5).

Despite cultural commentators such as Armstrong and Riese suggesting that queer girls are appearing on our television screens like never before,

coming out remains the primary narrative function for such figures. This situation is problematic because it is based on an assumed heterosexual norm, which leaves homosexuality as "that which produces narrative complication" (Allen 611). Because of this, the disclosure of (non-hetero-) sexuality is often "substituted for any possible narrative, romantic or otherwise, predicated on such a sexuality" (Allen 611). While there are only a minimal number of queer characters on most contemporary teen series, the more concerning issue is that coming out is all they do. They enter their respective series as heterosexual characters and their story arcs are generally the same. On top of this, the complex act of coming out and the articulation of queer identity becomes reduced to a singular action: an action that happens just once, to a single, solitary queer girl. This kind of depiction reiterates discourses of queerness as marginal, minor and ultimately, as aberration.

In *The Queer Politics of Television*, Samuel Chambers argues that a successful representation of coming out has the potential to illustrate "two crucial elements of producing and maintaining both gay and straight sexual identities in the face of societal heteronormativity" (60). Firstly, the coming-out narrative can illuminate the politics of the closet and "the complex negotiations of closet space" and, secondly, this narrative can "show that the very process [of coming out] can never be brought to a close" (60). Articulating a similar argument, Davis asserts that coming out can offer the potential to "enact a complicated enunciation of queerness, in which … a range of different modes of homosexuality are brought into play" (131). In practice, however, millennial teen television has been limited in its capacity to represent queerness through this dominant narrative. This is because coming out has typically been represented as a climax in the ultimate process of coming of age. This means the act of coming out is "not only an end in itself, but *the* end" to this singular narrative (Bronski 20). Within many representations, particularly those of the early to mid-2000s, queer girls are transient figures, either reverting to an initial state of heterosexuality or disappearing completely once the storyline has concluded. Looking across the history of teen television, it is possible to locate a mass of transient queer girls, characters who appear only to disappear. More recent representations are no different, confirming Driver's observation that "a brief shy kiss, a tomboy transgression, an 'innocent' crush, and playful flirtations are often valued only as temporary departures from a normative course toward feminine heterosexual adulthood" (7). Within numerous television series, queer desire is represented only on

the condition that it dissipates on maturation into "feminine heterosexual adulthood" or, at the very least, a more "mature" stage of heterosexual adolescence (Driver 7).

It is surprising to discover that television so frequently binds its representation of queer girls to such limited narratives. This is especially so when one considers the potential of this medium to present long-form narratives. As Robert J. Thompson argues in *Television's Second Golden Age*: From Hill Street Blues *to* ER, published in 1996, "unlike any other medium but old-time radio and the comic strip, television presents stories that can go on forever" (32). In *Serial Television*: *Big Drama on the Small Screen*, published in 2004, Glen Creeber also stresses this point, arguing that "simply in terms of hours alone the series and serial can produce a breadth of vision, a narrative scope and can capture an audience's involvement in a way equalled by few contemporary media" (4). These continuous narrative forms can, according to Creeber, "construct 'open' rather than 'closed' narrative forms" (4). Through the continuous nature of television's formal structures, "resolution is frequently delayed, conclusion is evaded and the neat typing up of all major storylines is generally avoided" (Creeber 4). Yet the majority of teen series do not depict queer girls and queer girlhood through ongoing televisual structures. Instead, they routinely represent queer girls through limited and "closed" narrative forms. However, two millennial British series do capitalise on these qualities to move beyond typically limited representation. What is unique about these series is that they incorporate the seriality of the televisual form into their representations of queer girls, elongating the traditionally "closed" narratives associated with the queer girl.

Serialising the Desire of the Queer Girl Protagonist: *Sugar Rush*

From 2003 to 2005, British actor Olivia Hallinan was best known as the protagonist of the teen series *Girls in Love*. Over 27 episodes, she played a love-struck teenage girl named Ellie. Episodes typically spanned 30 min in length, were narrated by Hallinan, and focused on Ellie's experiences of adolescent romance. When the series ended, Hallinan took on a similar role as Kim, the teenage protagonist of *Sugar Rush*. This series, based on a book of the same name by British author Julie Burchill, consisted of 20 episodes of approximately 30 min in length. Like *Girls in Love*, *Sugar Rush* was also narrated by Hallinan and focused on her character's experience of adolescent romance. The key difference: Ellie was a straight girl, but Kim was not.

An older, queerer extension of *Girls in Love*'s Ellie, *Sugar Rush*'s Kim was television's first queer girl protagonist. Like many teen series, *Sugar Rush* contained elements of both series and serial structure. As John Fiske notes in his influential study *Television Culture*, published in 1987, episodic series contain storylines that conclude at the end of each episode—"Serials, on the other hand," he writes, "have continuous storylines, normally more than one, that continue from episode to episode" (150). Jason Mittell's work on narrative complexity, published in 2006, and Mike Hammond and Lucy Mazdon's edited collection *The Contemporary Television Series*, published in 2005, suggest that contemporary television melds the two forms outlined by Fiske. In combining structural elements from both the episodic series and the ongoing serial, *Sugar Rush*'s narrative structure fostered both a continual reiteration of the series' concerns and a sense of longevity that helped to create a "sense of the future, of the existence of as yet unwritten events" (Fiske 145). Significantly, the series employed this structure for the purpose of expressing the ongoing desires of its queer girl protagonist Kim as she lusts after her best friend, Sugar (Lenora Crichlow).

Emphasising Kim's desire from the outset, the first episode of *Sugar Rush* (Fig. 3.2) opens with an image of two girls—Kim and Sugar—alone

Fig. 3.2 *Sugar Rush* (Katie Baxendale, 2005–2006) emphasises Kim's desire from the outset. In this shot from the first minutes of the first episode, an image of the two girls kissing dissolves into a closer shot

at a carnival. In the original broadcast, the lyrics of the song "No Sleep Tonight" by "girl band" The Faders reverberate around the carnival as Kim and Sugar spin around and around on a carnival ride. As the two girls lean in to kiss, the camera cuts to a shot of Kim in bed alone, her eyes firmly closed. The sound of the reverberating music is replaced by the sound of a vibrating device and the first of her internal voice-overs begins, "Ok. This is the twenty-first century. A 15-year-old using a toothbrush to masturbate about her best friend really shouldn't be that big a deal" (episode 1.1). The significance of this scene cannot be stressed enough—put simply, television audiences had never before seen queer girlhood (or girlhood for that matter) represented with this degree of frank sexuality.

The following scene continues in a similar manner. "After all," Kim says, "this *is* Brighton: Sin City," before going on to introduce her family and the reason for their recent move from London. With each of her introductions, the camera cuts to a shot that succinctly articulates Kim's perspective of each of the characters. Introducing herself, Kim immediately expresses her desire for Sugar. Here the camera takes on Kim's point of view as she looks in the direction of Sugar, leaning over a pool table. Her cue and long necklace direct the viewer's gaze to her breasts, which are at the centre of the frame. The camera lingers over Sugar's body as Kim's voice-over continues:

> The girl I'm sexually obsessed with. She'll do anything, say anything, have anything. Well, anything with a dick and that's the problem. She's not gay and I don't want to be. (episode 1.1)

Throughout the remainder of this episode, Kim attempts to overcome her crush on Sugar by losing her virginity, a traditional marker of heterosexual coming of age. However, the episode concludes in the same place where it began as Kim lies in bed alone, masturbating with an electric toothbrush. For Natalie Edwards, this emphasis on "Kim's *solo* sexual activities" signals that the first season was primarily concerned with "unfulfilled queer desire" (par. 9, emphasis original). Indeed, the closed circular format of the narrative is paralleled in many of the further episodes, in which Kim either attempts to overcome her "sexual obsession" with Sugar or attempts to have sex with Sugar, but ultimately ends up in the same place of sexual frustration.

Nevertheless, the series does include story arcs that extend beyond single episodes and thus elongates a traditionally limited queer storyline. While the storyline of the first episode is structured around Kim's attempt to transcend her homosexual desires, as the series progresses Kim comes to realise that she will not outgrow her queer identity. At the end of the first episode, her motivation promptly shifts and she turns her attention to seducing Sugar. Thus, throughout the first season we see Kim rapidly move from secretly lusting after Sugar to stealing her underwear, considering date rape a viable seduction method and intervening in Sugar's relationships with men before finally attempting to confess her own sexuality.

To understand the complexity of *Sugar Rush*, it is necessary to first locate it as a significant departure from the prevalent trope of "coming out as coming of age" in teen screen media (Monaghan, "Coming out and coming of age" 59). In this trope, coming out is represented as a means of transgressing the boundary between adolescence and adulthood. This is problematic because the conflation of the coming-out moment with the coming-of-age moment has often resulted in the "adultification" of the queer teen character, offering little room for complex representations of queer adolescents (Monaghan, "Coming out and coming of age" 59). Within such storylines, the coming-out moment is typically portrayed as a narrative climax and thus the act of coming out becomes the end of the queer girl's narrative presence within the program. As noted above, this is one of the key ways that the queer girl is temporalised as "a passing phase" within teen television. Significantly, *Sugar Rush* does not work this way, and Kim's narrative is not closed by the confession of her sexuality. Rather, through the repetitive episodic qualities of its format, Kim stages multiple coming-out moments over the first season without confronting the issue of coming of age until the final episode of season two.

The first season, in particular, is structured around a continual reiteration of Kim's sexuality that is expressed through the form and structure of the series itself. Each episode begins with a voice-over that acts as an assertion of Kim's status as a "fifteen-year-old queer virgin" or some variation thereof, constantly reminding the audience of the queer desires driving the narrative. This is further articulated stylistically, as the camera often takes on Kim's perspective during these brief introductions, lingering distractedly over Sugar's body and offering a visual manifestation of Kim's

desire. When Kim does finally come out to Sugar, in what should traditionally be the climax (and thus mark the conclusion) of her storyline, she finds herself inarticulate and it is Sugar who must speak for her:

> Sugar: Well, maybe you like me then. Ha-ha … what?
> Kim: [silence]
> Sugar: Oh my god. My god! You fancy me.
> Kim: I've got to go. (episode 1.6)

Kim does articulate her sexuality in a later episode in which she tells the annoying son of her neighbours that she cannot date him because she is "gay" (episode 1.9). This is followed by an immediate internal monologue that is expressed through a voice-over in which Kim optimistically informs the audience that "For the first time I was out and proud" (episode 1.9). Kim does not come of age through these encounters. In fact, she does not face this issue until the final episode of the second season, where she deliberates moving in with her girlfriend.

Typically, when queer characters do exceed their primary narrative function and continue to appear in television narratives after coming out, "the fate of such characters is often to have the queer aspects of their lives (sex, love, queer friends and spaces, homophobia) elided" (Davis & Needham 7). What is significant about *Sugar Rush* is that it does not do this. Rather, it is structured around the "queer aspects" of its protagonist's life. Where the first season focuses intently on the negotiation of identity and the angst associated with unfulfilled queer desires, the second season shifts this attention to its queer protagonist negotiating new queer spaces and community and, ultimately, to the question of what it means to grow from a queer girl into a queer woman.

The second season begins in very much the same way as the first. We return to the carnival ride, although this time Kim appears to be riding alone. Her voice-over informs viewers that "It's 18 months since I hotwired a car, stole my mum's credit card and had hot lesbian sex with my best friend, Sugar. And things are going great." With this, Kim leans to her right, revealing a woman on the carnival ride with her. They kiss and she continues "Really great" as another woman appears to her left. As they begin to kiss, Kim's voice-over quickly interrupts: "Yeah, right." The illusion is thus shattered and the image of the carnival quickly cuts to an image of Kim alone in bed, "Life is back to normal, nothing's changed" she assures us. The sound of her vibrating toothbrush emerges as her voice-over starts to trail off. Kim continues, "My toothbrush has seen better days" (episode 2.1).

In this first episode, Kim is introduced to what Davis and Needham define as the key aspects of queer life—sex, love, friends and spaces—after accidently bumping into a girl (Sarah Jane Potts) who is carrying a bag of sex toys. Her attraction to this new character is made apparent through Kim's embarrassment in this scene as dildos and vibrators spill to the ground and Kim clumsily helps to collect them. Following the girl to the sex shop—the Munch Box—Kim muses that she could "just walk in there and ask her out" but does not have the courage to do so. Instead, she comically purchases an assortment of sex toys as the sexually suggestive lyrics of the song "Would you...?" by British band Touch and Go reverberate around the room. Later in this episode, the shop girl introduces herself as Saint and eventually asks Kim out to the local lesbian club—the Clit Club—where she meets an attractive and manipulative older woman whom she has sex with. Mirroring the narrative circularity of the first episode of season one, at the conclusion of this episode Kim again bumps into Saint, but the second time walks away with her number. Saint thus acts as a gateway to previously unexplored queer scenes and spaces of the series' setting.

Discussing these elements of the series, Edwards notes that *Sugar Rush* offers a "cosmopolitan perspective" of queer life as it presents its audience "with a selection of queer characters who interact with and are, to a greater or lesser extent, integrated into the (predominantly heterosexual) wider community" (par. 14, par. 15). This cosmopolitanism, writes Edwards, is strongly linked to the "backdrop of queer arenas" that constitute *Sugar Rush's* locations (par. 17). The Clit Club and Munch Box are among these primary "queer arenas" where Kim finds herself both literally and figuratively. Notably, this connection between identity, community and space is established when Kim faces difficulties reconciling her old life with her new one in episode 2.4. In this episode, Kim attempts to introduce Sugar to her newfound queer life but Sugar resists, argumentatively asserting: "I get it, all right, you're a proper grown-up lezzer with your lezzer friends and your dodgy bar" (episode 2.4). In later episodes, Kim initiates other characters into these queer spaces as she gains confidence within them, reflective of the use of an ongoing serial structure to develop both storylines and characters. Within these episodes we are reminded that, despite the fact that many of *Sugar Rush's* episodes have returned Kim to a state of unfulfilled desire, both her storyline and her sexual subjectivity have continued to develop as the series has progressed.

As the second season focuses primarily on the expression and fulfilment of queer desire, *Sugar Rush*'s serial format maintains the emphasis on both

desire and sex that propelled the narrative of the first season. Through this, as Edwards suggests, "The frustrations which beset... [Kim] throughout the first series [are] supplanted by the dilemmas which result from her often unsophisticated navigation of her queer sexual identity" (par. 9). The second season sees Kim engaging in sexual activities including bondage and role-play while also feeling anxious about her sexual inexperience. When thinking about sleeping with Saint, Kim expresses these anxieties through voice-over:

> Thinking about all of the things I wanted to do with her was fine. But in reality, satisfying the girl who worked in the sex shop was a frightening prospect. What if she had accessories I'd never seen? What if I couldn't strap them on right? What if I put the wrong end in the wrong place? (episode 2.3)

Moving beyond the limited nature of the brief coming-out narrative, *Sugar Rush*'*s* unique format allows questions such as these to be asked, for the first time, on teen television. The series achieves this by coupling an episodic structure that continually emphasises Kim's desires with an ongoing serial format that elongates the queer girl's narrative. Bringing these forms together in this way is an instance of developing narrative complexity and longevity, as Mittell and Creeber have discussed. What this enables is more complex and nuanced representations of queer characters and lives.

With this newfound longevity, *Sugar Rush* is also able to contrast Kim's subjectivity and experiences with those of the other female adolescent characters of the series. Notably, Kim's queer desires are contrasted throughout both seasons with those of her heterosexual love interest, Sugar. This contrast is most evident in Sugar's brief flirtation with lesbianism within season one, in which the series engages with the dominant representation of adolescent lesbianism as "a passing phase." In episode 1.7, after learning of Kim's sexual attraction to her, Sugar flirts with the idea of desiring women, telling Kim that men are "more trouble than what they're worth" before suggesting that she could experiment with women (episode 1.7). In this episode, an extended montage positions Kim and Sugar like a couple as the camera follows around them Brighton holding hands. Following this, the two characters visit the local night club. After entering the club, they immediately head to the dance floor and shadows roll over their faces as they dance closely and intimately. A few moments into this scene, a man approaches them asking whether they are lesbians, to which Sugar quickly replies, "Yes."

While the camera often takes on Kim's physical point of view in relation to Sugar in the series, in this scene, however, the movement and framing of the camera, lighting and soundtrack come to represent Kim's emotional point of view. The camera orbits Kim and Sugar as they kiss and the frame is filled with close-ups of lips, eyes and coloured lights. This montage of close-ups is briefly replaced by a moment of shadowy darkness and when the lights return, the camera zooms out as Kim and Sugar continue to kiss. Here the music abruptly transitions from a light dance track to a softer song performed by a single piano. The camera continues its orbit as Kim's voice-over optimistically asserts, "Tonight I was living the dream." However, this dream is soon shattered as Kim discovers that the kiss was, for Sugar, just an experiment and another way of "turn[ing] on loser guys" (episode 1.10). Sugar later argues that this kind of experimentation is acceptable so long as it is not permanent (episode 2.3), precisely reiterating the figuration of queer desire as an aberration or interruption. Significantly, this view is not positioned as the norm within the diegesis, as Kim's storyline challenges this dominant temporalisation of the queer girl. In contrast to Sugar, Kim's homosexuality is represented as permanent and ongoing, extending her queer desire beyond a brief experimentation.

Despite presenting the unique singular perspective of a queer girl protagonist in this way, the series was limited by its inevitable conclusion. Notably, this conclusion was marked by the possibility of Kim's transition to adulthood, raising the important question of what it means to grow from a queer girl into a queer woman. This question had never been tackled by television before because this format had dominantly temporalised queer girls as "a passing phase" of adolescence; a phase that ends on maturation into adulthood and often concludes with the disappearance of the queer girl from televisual narratives. Textually, at least, *Sugar Rush* did not appear to shy away from this question and the complex issues surrounding it. The series ends on a speculative note, in which Kim ruminates, "When you glimpse the future and it looks fantastic, do you jump in feet first? Or do you keep one foot in the past, just in case?" (episode 2.10). Kim's final words seem to suggest the possibility of a continuing storyline, fostering, as Fiske argues of serial television, "a sense of the future, of the existence of as yet unwritten events" (145). But, following these questions, television's first queer girl protagonist disappeared from the screen. Further, following the final episode, a spokeswoman for the television channel confirmed that there were never any plans for *Sugar Rush* to be extended beyond the second season because the producers "felt the girls'

story had run its course" (Sale par. 3). In its ambiguous conclusion, then, Kim is caught in a perpetual "in-between" and not quite situated within either adolescence or adulthood. What this means is that although *Sugar Rush* raises the issue of coming of age and growing up, it never actually addresses it. Thus, while *Sugar Rush* significantly extended the queer girl's story beyond a short narrative arc, it did not radically move beyond it. By concluding at this point and asserting that the "story had run its course," *Sugar Rush* ultimately seems to suggest that queerness is a uniquely adolescent subjectivity, experience and feeling.

Serialising a Relationship Between Queer Girls: *Skins*

In a similar manner to *Sugar Rush*, UK teen drama *Skins* elongates the traditionally short representation of the queer girl. However, as I will demonstrate in this section, *Skins* achieves something beyond *Sugar Rush's* representation of the queer girl via its representation of an often troubled relationship between queer girls Emily (Kathryn Prescott) and Naomi (Lily Loveless). Like many teen series, *Skins* is about a group of students at a high school. As the characters progress through the final years of schooling, they are confronted with questions of self and identity, much like any other teen series. However, this series has a unique format that marks it as distinct from most teen programming. Where most teen series follow a group of students as they move through their high school years and on to university, *Skins* is structured around generations of students in their final 2 years of school at Roundview College, a fictional school in Bristol, West England.

This series deals with the issue of its characters "growing up" (an issue that often plagues the teen genre) by replacing them. Each generation of characters remains with the series for two seasons that represent the final 2 years at Roundview. Mimicking the transient temporality of high school, the primary ensemble of characters is then replaced by a new group who begin their time at the school. This unique structure means that we do not follow the characters "growing up" in the same manner that we do in *Sugar Rush* and far less emphasis is placed on coming of age. Rather, *Skins* provides a snapshot of adolescent life from a variety of different perspectives, decentralising exposition in favour of the aesthetic development of a particular mood. In this way, *Skins* moves beyond the limitation of *Sugar Rush* as it resists ultimate narrative closure and completely avoids

the issue of coming of age. With this temporal limit embedded within the series from the outset, *Skins* replaces the question of "what does the future hold" with "What can happen now?" With this, *Skins* shifts the orientation of the teen genre from the future to the present and, rather than speculating about events to come, *Skins* explores the possibilities of the present moment.

This present-orientation is continually emphasised as the series raises its genre-specific questions about self and identity against a background of drug-fuelled parties, sex and alcohol abuse; a setting where the temporary high takes precedence over the consequences of the next morning. This is further illuminated through episodes that, while telling a chronological story, are organised around individual characters. Each hour-long episode focuses on a single character, "telling their story through sparse, music-laden scripts" (Green par. 3). Often these storylines overlap and while one storyline is foregrounded, others continue in the background. In this way, *Skins* resists neat closure of its narrative threads, eschewing the sense of linear progression that is typical of the teen genre. Instead, it presents its audience with an interwoven set of storylines that allows the series to enact multiple perspectives on individual events.

What this means for the queer girl characters is threefold. Firstly, as there is no voice-over guiding the audience through the narrative, the developing relationship between the queer girls is enacted through gesture, not exposition or dialogue. Secondly, with the series focused on the present rather than the future, the relationship between the girls is allowed to "breathe" and develop at a slower pace (Davis 131). Instead of enacting the trope of coming out as coming of age through which the protagonist is inevitably matured, *Skins* pauses, which enables the series to represent the complexity of its queer girl characters and their experiences. Finally, the structure of the series enables a more radical multi-perspectival view of this queer relationship. While *Sugar Rush* focuses on the desires of a single protagonist, often expressed through voice-over narration, *Skins* provides multiple perspectives of a developing relationship. As we watch the relationship build, we see each of the characters react to it at different times. This presents the audience with an alternative to the singular coming-out narrative because each character learns of the relationship at a different point throughout the series.

The first shot of season three introduces Emily as she carefully lays out her clothes for the day ahead. She is characterised by her long, red hair and asymmetrical fringe and is immediately associated with her identical

twin Katie (Megan Prescott). From their two single beds placed on opposite walls to their matching asymmetrical hairstyles (one girl's fringe falls to the left, the other's to the right) to their opposing personalities, Emily and Katie exist, at least initially, as reflections of each other. This is further emphasised in the first episode when the characters introduce themselves to their class. In this scene, each of the characters succinctly expresses their identities through a single sentence. Katie begins enthusiastically by telling her peers that "I've never not had a boyfriend." This is mirrored by Emily, who articulates her identity via "I've never had a boyfriend." This thematic association between Emily and Katie extends allegorically to the series' depiction of queer sexuality and the process of coming out, as Emily's struggle for individuality is paralleled with the questioning of her sexuality throughout the third season.

The other half of *Skins*' queer dyad, Naomi, is introduced later in this episode. With shorter hair and "alternative" style, Naomi is marked as visually distinct from the other female characters in the series. This aesthetic actively encourages the audience to speculate about her sexuality and this is fuelled throughout the first episode. In one notable scene, Katie refers to Naomi as a "total lezzer bitch" who "tried to snog my sister at middle school" and Naomi quickly retorts with sarcasm, "Watch out, Katie. I might get confused and fuck you with my great big strap-on by mistake" before walking away. In the classroom scene, Naomi articulates her sense of self confidently: "I hate injustice. People tell lies about me." With this, she sits and looks over her shoulder at Emily. As the camera shifts to reframe the girls, a student outside the frame quietly says, "I'm gay." This quiet piece of dialogue, coupled with the exchange of looks between Emily and Naomi, foreshadows the events of later episodes and further enhances the expectation that Naomi is this series' closet gay character.

In the following episode, however, a brief conversation between Emily and Naomi deflects this expectation. In this episode, the ensemble of characters gathers to celebrate Cook's (Jack O'Connell) seventeenth birthday. After spending the afternoon at a pub, the group crashes an engagement party and attempts to score drugs from the bride-to-be. As the party turns violent, Naomi leaves. However, she is followed by Emily, who stops her in the carpark:

> Emily: Where are you going?
> Naomi: Home.
> Emily: Don't go …

Naomi: Why not?
Emily: I don't know … because …
Naomi: Why does your sister think *I'm* gay?
Emily: I'm sorry.
Naomi: See you round, Emily. (episode 3.02)

With this brief moment of dialogue the series deflects our expectations; it is Emily rather than Naomi who is "outed" through this exchange. Yet unlike other teen series featuring queer characters, this outing is not climactic or explicitly framed around an announcement: it is a brief moment of dialogue that is peripheral to the main storyline of this episode. This in itself is notable, but it is also significant that the expectation this conversation actively deflects—that Naomi is a closeted gay character—is set up almost entirely by visual cues rather than auditory or narration-based framing. While some dialogue does fuel our speculation that Naomi is gay, the expectation is set up primarily through costuming and the subtle series of non-verbal exchanges between Emily and Naomi that pepper the previous episode: Emily staring at Naomi in the assembly, Naomi glancing at Emily after Katie verbally abuses her and for a brief moment in the classroom where they both look over their shoulders and catch each other's gaze. The visual framing of these exchanges makes the moments feel as if we, the audience, are observing things that the characters themselves are unaware of; as if we are catching them out as they accidentally let their guard down during moments when they think no one is watching. What this does is foster a sense of intimacy, but this is a different kind of intimacy to that of a series such as *Sugar Rush*, which is constructed around the inner-thoughts of its protagonist.

In contrast to *Sugar Rush*'s prominent voice-overs and witty, dialogue-based narratives, *Skins* often relies on the expressive qualities of its soundtrack to complement its emotionally affective storylines. In addition to this, the series focuses on the movements and gestures of its actors rather than their words. As Green notes, "anyone who has ever watched *Skins* will know that the silences between characters are just as important as the words: many of the scenes are short and rely on the actors' expressions as much as the script" (par. 12). In this way, *Skins* adopts a melodramatic mode of expression through which "the meaning of everyday action, ordinary gesture, and standard decor is thus intensified so that the psychic strains and breaks or rise in feeling are made manifest" (Joyrich 131). Yet unlike adult melodrama, *Skins* does not employ this mode to express

"primarily ideological and social conflicts in emotional terms" but rather to tap into a unique moment of adolescence characterised by the inability to articulate feelings or desires (Joyrich 131).

This is particularly evident within Naomi's feature episode, in which the two girls go camping together and end up having sex (episode 3.06). In one significant scene, the music begins as Emily, filmed in medium shot, lights a joint, puts the lit end in her mouth, places Naomi's hands over her cheeks and encourages her to take a drag. When the characters move apart they simply look at each other, exchanging deep and intimate stares in the warm light of the fire. The stationary camera and the sparseness of dialogue amplify the little things: eyes meeting, small smiles and the flicker of one character's gaze to the other character's lips. Naomi leans into Emily's space and softly kisses her, then with a shy smile asks Emily to "say something." The response, however, is again non-verbal: a shy smile followed by kisses that increase in intensity, leading to sex. Following the sex scene, the camera (paralleling an earlier scene) captures Emily waking as Naomi leaves the camping area. Chasing her, Emily desperately pleads, "I know you, Naomi. I know you're lonely. I think you need someone to want you." She stops following as Naomi continues to walk away, the desperation audible in her voice: "Well, I do want you. So be brave. Want me back." Here the camera moves with Naomi, her face remaining a steady presence in the moving frame. As she gradually moves further away, Naomi's eyes fill with emotion and Emily appears smaller and smaller in the frame. Although the dialogue here *is* important, the framing of Naomi as she walks away from Emily reflects far more emotionally.

Gesture is further emphasised later in this episode when Naomi goes to Emily's house to apologise. She rings the bell and waits patiently at the door, taking deep breaths. Through the door, Emily tells her that "I'm not going to open the door. My face is all puffy. I've been crying a bit" and the following exchange occurs via a shot/reverse shot formation with the door separating the two characters:

> Naomi: I don't care … I do want someone, need someone. You were right.
> Emily [taking deep breaths]: And?
> Naomi: And when I'm with you I feel like I'm a better person. I feel happier, less … alone, less lonely … [Emily reaches her hand through the cat door and they hold hands through the tiny door] It's not as simple as that. Is it? Being with someone…
> Emily: Isn't it?

> Naomi: No. I mean, I don't know. I mean, I don't think so … [crying] Can't we just sit like this for a bit?
> Emily: Yeah, we can.
> [They both rest their heads on either side of the door and the scene concludes]

With this piece of dialogue, Emily and Naomi simultaneously rest their heads on either side of the door as the scene fades to black (Fig. 3.3). Tapping into the melodramatic mode, the intensification of this scene is "heightened by concentrated visual metaphors" such as the simultaneous resting of heads against the door and the caress through the cat door (Joyrich 131). Here the visual metaphors are complemented by the non-verbal—those moments of silence, the pauses before the spoken dialogue and the lack of non-diegetic music—reflecting an interior rather than exterior consciousness. Further, the romantic symmetry of the mirrored postures as the two lovers rest against the door is indicative of their complementary roles in the dyadic relationship.

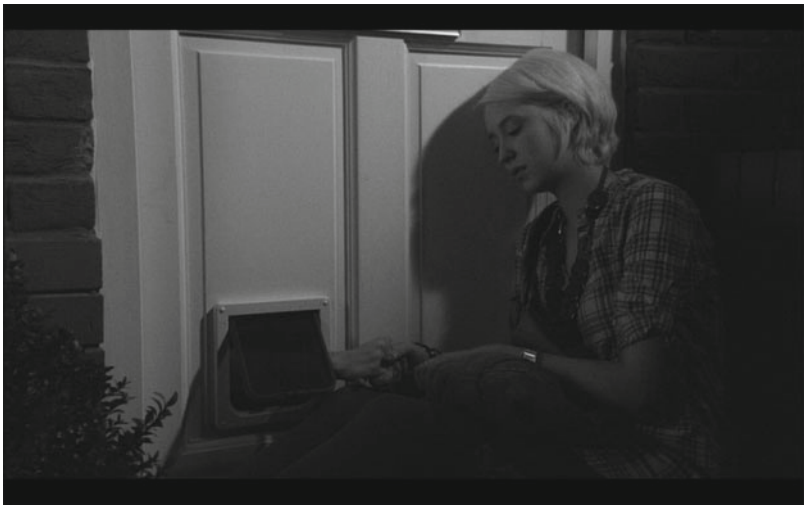

Fig. 3.3 *Skins* (Jamie Brittain and Brian Elsley, 2007–2013) emphasises visual metaphors in scenes such as this: Emily and Naomi hold hands through the cat door

Repeatedly, gesture is emphasised within the series in ways that could not happen in a short, concise narrative arc driven primarily by exposition. This focus on gesture points to adolescence, particularly for the queer girl characters, as a place outside the adult command of language. Within this storyline in particular, the focus on non-verbal communication challenges the primacy of language within the typical coming-out narrative. The emphasis on the gestural becomes another means of expressing desire, difference and sexuality without relying on dialogue-based, expository storytelling. Privileging the non-verbal, the gestural, over spoken dialogue, this series ultimately rejects the traditional narrative through which coming out emphasises a "brief moment of difference" and public declaration but denies the experiences of being young and queer "beyond dramatic scenes of revelation" (Driver, *Queer Girls* 58).

Yet in addition to this emphasis on the gestural over the spoken, this scene through the cat flap also illuminates something about the series in general. As I noted earlier, because *Skins* eschews the issue of coming of age, its narratives are not focused on the future but rather on the present. This is, on one level, emphasised through its valorisation of selfish, hedonistic characters who spend much of their time intoxicated. In the cat door scene, however, questions of the present and the future are explicitly engaged as Emily and Naomi talk about what it might mean to be together. Naomi asks whether it would be ok to forget about their issues and "just sit like this for a bit." The scene closes with these two characters holding hands through the cat door and resting their heads on the door that separates them. Their issues are too much for this moment and they delay answering their questions by simply sitting together in silence. What *Skins* does in this scene, and more generally, is pause. It allows us, and its characters, to catch our breath in the tumultuous time of adolescence. And, particularly in relation to its queer girls, it allows the developing relationship to breathe, to develop at a slower and more realistic pace (Davis 131).

In this pause, we are witness to the complexities of the queer girl and queer adolescent relationships in more detail than in many other teen series, including *Sugar Rush*. The series presents the tentative beginnings of a complex relationship through segments including the cat door scene where the dynamic between these characters is developed. *Skins* also focuses on the messiness, the bittersweet moments and the breakdown of relationships, ultimately not affirming nostalgic and romantic accounts of adolescence. As Deborah Hunn argues in "The dark side of naomily," this series moves "beyond the narrative closure of coming out as individuals …

to an attempted exploration of the problems of *being* out in an ongoing relationship" (91, emphasis original). Naomi says in episode 4.03, "I feel shit and all I can do is … feel it" and all we, as audience, can do is watch as her relationship and her life slowly unravel. This is significant because feeling "shit" is not something that queer girl characters are permitted within most film and television, at least not to this extent, even though the storylines may involve angst, unrequited love and the anxiety associated with coming out. However, the ongoing seriality of the *Skins* narrative format, and the fourth season in particular, emphasises the discord between Emily and Naomi and the fact that sometimes "relationships suck, they really fucking suck" (episode 4.06). In this part of the Emily/Naomi storyline, the *mise-en-scène* changes as duller colours, dimmer and colder lighting and a bluer palette reflective of the state of their relationship replace the warmth and glow of the previous season.

The body language between Emily and Naomi also changes and throughout season four they rarely face each other when speaking. This is particularly evident when Emily discovers that Naomi has cheated on her with another girl. On the roof of a building, Naomi watches as Emily sits on the ledge, reading from the other girl's secret journal and, on occasion, looking at the ground beneath her. Here the camera switches from a long shot to a fixed crane shot, capturing a birds-eye view of the scene. As Emily reads the journal, the girl's story is told via a short hand-drawn animation. When we return to the rooftop, however, the camera is positioned over Naomi's shoulder as she desperately pleads, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry." This is followed by a quick close up of Naomi's distraught face before we see Emily turn around to tell her that she has "ruined it." Standing up, she turns away and looks over the ledge as we return to the birds-eye perspective. "I could be dead in a second," she calmly says, "Everything's … so … fragile … Didn't you realise that?" Coupled with the constantly changing camera set up, the dialogue in this scene emphasises the way the series acts as a counterpoint to the brief and overly simplified dominant representation of the queer girl. Scenes such as this highlight the way that *Skins* works with the fragility, the messiness and the troubled nature of some relationships. In this way, it is also vastly different from the more idealised depictions of teenage experience that are so typical of the teen genre.

Yet this is not the only way that *Skins* departs from prior representations of the queer girl: it also weaves the relationship between Emily and Naomi with a number of other storylines. Interweaving the queer girl stories into the very fabric of the series without shutting down its potentialities

or "closing" it off, *Skins* offers multiple perspectives of its queer girls. Although each hour-long episode focuses on one character, the Emily/Naomi storyline impacts significantly on the narratives of other characters. For instance, the budding relationship between Emily and Naomi significantly complicates Katie's episode as she continually seeks to control Emily. It also arises within an episode focused on JJ (Ollie Barbieri), who loses his virginity to Emily, and an episode focused on Cook, a character who constantly attempts to seduce Naomi.

A significant implication of these multiple narratives is that we see many of the other characters reacting to and reflecting on the Emily/Naomi relationship. Indeed, a third party witnesses much of the interaction between Emily and Naomi for the first half of the third season, while their relationship remains ambiguous. For instance, the action in episode 3.03 takes place at an underground party. In one scene, Naomi walks into a cave-like space alone while Emily approaches her from behind. Capturing the secluded nature of the space, the camera frames both Naomi and Emily in front of a backdrop of private conversations and intimate moments with the shadows of the cave. Here Emily confesses to Naomi that she wants to kiss her and this is overheard by another character.

A similar situation occurs twice in the following episode, in which the girls have a drug-fuelled pyjama party (episode 3.04). For the first time, Naomi and Emily appear to be alone in the living room of their friend's house. Naomi asks, "Which do you want?" as she holds two bottles of alcohol. Emily says she does not care, "Just give me a fucking … just give me a …" As her eyes dart across Naomi's face, the camera emphasises Emily's gaze shifting between Naomi's lips and eyes before the characters begin to kiss. Significantly, Naomi responds to the kiss by questioning "It's only the drugs, right?" Emily nods, signalling the way for a consequence-free fulfilment of such desires. Here the volume of the diegetic music increases as the lyrics to Lily Allen's "The Fear" overwhelm any other diegetic sound and frame the scene. As they finish kissing, Emily asserts, "You liked that." Naomi bites her lip, takes a deep breath, smiles and retorts, "You're gay." She nods and walks out of the frame. Emily quietly says "Yes" as she turns and follows. This is an intimate moment between these characters and the first time that Emily admits her sexuality aloud (Figs. 3.4 and 3.5). Emphasising this, the camera slowly closes in on the conversation, giving the scene an overwhelming feel of privacy. However, the camera pulls away at the conclusion of the dialogue to reveal another character, enacting the spectatorship of the viewer intently watching this intimate exchange.

Fig. 3.4 The camera closes in on Emily and Naomi as they kiss, giving the scene a feel of privacy

Fig. 3.5 However, the camera pulls away to reveal another character watching the scene, enacting the spectatorship of the viewer

Later we see Katie walking through the house alone. Followed by the camera, she moves through the aftermath of the party and looks through the kitchen window in an attempt to locate a series of girlish squeals and laughter. Here the shot/reverse shot pattern reveals both action and reaction as Katie laughs while watching Emily and Naomi jumping and falling from an inflatable castle in the backyard. The camera zooms in, reflective of Katie's point of view, as Emily straddles Naomi and they kiss. We return once more to Katie, staring through the kitchen window, visibly shocked. Through this specific mode of storytelling in which the queer dyad is viewed not only through the eyes of the spectator but also through the eyes of other characters, *Skins* offers multiple perspectives to a central queer storyline, unlike other teen serials. This is a more radical serial form than that exemplified by *Sugar Rush*, as this multi-perspectivalism allows the audience to "come to feel a greater command of an issue or situation than do the characters" (Wittebols 3).

Despite this narrative radicalism and the elongation of its queer relationship, *Skins* is also limited by the televisual form. The series adopts a particular narrative structure that eschews issues of growing up and works to shift the emphasis of the teen genre from the future to the present because it replaces its cast every 2 years. However, *Skins* is ultimately limited by this format because its complex, multi-perspectival narratives must be condensed to no more than 20 episodes. Liberating as this format is, it also means that the series can only tell its stories with a finite depth.

On Queerness, Queer Girls and Television

As I have identified, teen television dominantly represents queer girls according to a particular temporal logic that positions queerness as "a passing phase" of adolescence. This is achieved through plot devices and narrative forms including the "gay kiss," the brief narrative arc and, surprisingly, the coming-out narrative. While these televisual techniques should result in greater space for the elaboration of queer subjectivity and aesthetics, they predominantly characterise queerness as an aberrant narrative complication, emphasising queerness as "a passing phase" within television. What I have explored in this chapter is whether the integration of televisual seriality can affect these representations. My analysis of *Sugar Rush* and *Skins* identifies two key ways that the figuration of queerness as "a passing phase" can be challenged by incorporating the seriality of the televisual form into the representations of queer girls. The first of these

is through serialising and elongating the storyline of a single protagonist. The second is the serialisation and extension of a relationship between queer girls.

Sugar Rush operates in the first mode. It elongates a storyline that is traditionally closed, offering a more complex representation of a single queer girl. Because the series is so closely aligned with one character's perspective, it acts as an interrogation of this character's subjectivity and desires. This had not been achieved before (or for that matter, since) on teen television. Yet, as I have identified, the series is also limited by this. It is, in many ways, similar to an elongated film: it must approach closure; its adolescent protagonist must address the question of "growing up."

Skins, on the other hand, operates in the second mode. It achieves a representation of queer girlhood beyond that of *Sugar Rush* because it offers multiple perspectives on the developing relationship between its queer girls. Within this series, the question of "growing up" is avoided because a temporal limit is embedded within the serial structure: the series is premised on our understanding that we will only see these characters for 2 years. While this does liberate *Skins* from the issue of "coming of age," this is also a limitation: it means that the series can only tell its complex stories with finite depth. There is no chance for character or storyline development beyond this.

Sugar Rush and *Skins* place the experiences of the queer girl at the very centre of their narratives, interrogating the surfaces of queer desire and opening up the possibility for more complex representations of queer girls. To return to an earlier quote by Driver, these series frame the subjectivity of the queer girl not as a "temporary departure from a normative course toward feminine heterosexual adulthood" as is the case within many teen series, but rather as a viable alternative and a driving narrative force (7). However, what these two series also suggest is that while the integration of televisual seriality can eschew the climatic revelation of non-heterosexuality and elongate the time of the queer girl, seriality alone cannot dismantle the dominant temporalisation of the queer girl as "a passing phase." While queerness is not rendered "a passing phase" of adolescence within these series, there are still significant issues pertaining to the televisual form that ultimately renders it "a passing phase" of television, albeit an extended one. And yet despite this continuing issue, it is important to remember this: what television series such as *Sugar Rush* and *Skins* achieve in their integration of seriality is stretch out and slow down the representation of queer girls. In some ways this form of representation is similar

to what Stockton describes in her work on queer temporalities: that in contrast to the linear progression of heteronormative temporal frames, the time of queerness is characterised by delay and lateral growth. Queerness is, for Stockton, a kind of sideways twist that emphasises "the horizontal—what spreads sideways—or sideways and backwards—more than a simple thrust toward height and forward time" (4). What does this mean when considered in relation to television more generally and the series I have discussed in this chapter? *Sugar Rush* and *Skins* remind us that there is the possibility of telling stories laterally rather than linearly, that there are ways of representing queer girls that do not fit with the strict economy of linear progression characterising the typical coming-out narrative, and that detours and pauses can be valued just as much as the moment when one character proclaims "I'm a lesbian" for the first time.

CHAPTER 4

Retrospective Narratives, Nostalgia and the Queer Girl: *For 80 Days* and *Butterfly*

In Jon Garaño and José María Goenaga's 2010 film *For 80 Days/80 Egunean*, two 70-year-old protagonists, Axun (Itziar Aizpuru) and Maite (Mariasun Pagoaga), meet at a hospital where they are both visiting loved ones. Each day the two women encounter each other in the confines of the hospital room. It is this setting, among the comatose bodies of their charges, where they come to remember a lost past. On their second meeting, one woman brings a record player to the hospital room and plays a song that ignites a flash of recognition. Memories flood back with the familiar hue of nostalgia as the music links these two elderly women with the two girls that they used to be and the relationship they once had. Although they do not initially recognise one another, feelings that were once illicit begin to re-emerge between the two women.

Over the 80 days that span the film's narrative, the two women occupy a position akin to Heather Love's description of the contemporary queer experience. Love argues that "Queers face a strange choice" as they are forced to reckon with contradictory feelings. These feelings emerge within the question of whether it is "better to move toward a brighter future or to hang back and cling to the past?" (27). As Love argues, "such divided allegiances result in contradictory feelings: pride and shame, anticipation and regret, hope and despair," meaning that the contemporary queer experience lies within "the odd situation of 'looking forward' while we are 'feeling backward'" (27).

This is distilled within *For 80 Days* as the suppleness of youth and the lines of age condense into one another. The older women adopt girlish

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gestures, "feeling backward" to the intimacy of their past while "looking forward" to the possibility of starting something new. The central conflict of this film, however, is that Axun is married and her husband is increasingly unable to take care of himself. As Axun looks towards her potential future with Maite, she is constantly stifled via her ties to the other imagined future of her youth: her present hetero-marital relationship. Through this central conflict, *For 80 Days* temporalises the queer girl and characterises queerness as "a passing phase," based here on the romance of an idealised memory. Through this, *For 80 Days* comes to exemplify another way that queerness is temporalised as "a passing phase" within contemporary screen media. This film is built around the implicit assurance that queer experience can exist only in the past, as the queerness at its core is an idealised memory that cannot be reignited in the present.

Heather Love's *Feeling Backwards*: *Loss And The Politics Of Queer History*, published in 2007, gestures towards the losses of the queer past, emphasising the influence of this past on both the lived experience of queer people and queer criticism more generally. Writing that the "central paradox of any transformative criticism is that its dreams for the future are founded on a history of suffering, stigma and violence," Love suggests that both the present and future will always be bound up in the losses of the past (1):

> Insofar as the losses of the past motivate us and give meaning to our current experience, we are bound to memorialise them ('We will never forget'). But we are equally bound to overcome the past, to escape its legacy ('We will never go back'). (Love 1)

For Love, the queer past thus exists in a complex relationship with both the present and the future as it is both memorialised and escaped. Much like the characters of Axun and Maite, Love asserts that the contemporary queer situation is that of "looking forward" while "feeling backward" because although we are bound to remember the losses of our past, "we are [also] in practice deeply committed to the notion of progress; despite our reservations, we just cannot stop dreaming of a better life for queer people" (27, 3). In order to engage with the past "without being destroyed by it," Love calls for a criticism that pays particular attention to "feelings tied to the experience of social inclusion and to the historical '*impossibility*' *of same-sex desire*," to feelings such as shame, despair, regret and, significantly, nostalgia (1, 4, emphasis added).

Both nostalgia and the "'impossibility' of same-sex desire" are also discussed in Martin's *Backward Glances* in which she examines the representation of female homoeroticism in contemporary Chinese culture. From Love's work on backwardness, Martin conceptualises a "memorial mode of representation" that she argues is particular to Chinese representations of adolescent same-sex love (3). While Martin refers to a particular national context, her discussion of the "same-sex attracted schoolgirl" has much to offer, particularly with respect to her emphasis on temporality (24).

In this chapter I engage both Martin's "memorial mode of representation" and Love's emphasis on what she terms the "backwardness" of queer culture to examine two modes of retrospective narration that represent queer girlhood alongside nostalgia. As I will demonstrate, the first of these uses nostalgic memories to render queer romance as "a passing phase." As in *For 80 Days*, this was achieved by associating queerness with memory while nostalgically and retrospectively framing a central queer relationship. I explore this first mode through Martin's conceptualisation of the "memorial schoolgirl romance," extending Martin's argument to observe that within this mode queerness is depicted as incongruous with futurity and subsequently relegated to the past.

It is here that the key question driving this chapter emerges, whether retrospective narratives can enable a more productive view of queer girlhood. To answer this question, I explore nostalgia as a critical concept and question how these understandings might allow us to divine nostalgia's queer potential. By tracing nostalgia's concept from its inception in medical discourse through to its contemporary uses within queer theory, I am led to a second mode of retrospective narration, one that engages the queer potential of nostalgia as a means of drawing the past and present alongside one another. As I demonstrate within my analysis of the Hong Kong film *Butterfly/Hu die*, this use of nostalgia employs nostalgic memories as a means of imagining a utopian and queer future. While this film is also examined by Martin in *Backward Glances*, I offer an alternative reading by considering the film through José Muñoz's ideas of queer futurity. I question how the nostalgic memories of the queer past might be employed within contemporary screen media to imagine, as Muñoz suggests, "new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds" (*Cruising Utopia* 1).

Narratives of Going in Rather Than Coming Out: The "Memorial Mode of Representation"

Although not all memories are nostalgic nor are all films about memory, it is almost impossible to consider the practice of remembering without also considering the concept of nostalgia. In *The Sexual Politics of Time*: *Confession*, *Nostalgia*, *Memory* published in 2007, Susannah Radstone argues that "nostalgia … has become a key term in discussions of the varieties of remembrance commonly practiced and represented" throughout contemporary culture (Radstone 112). Invoked beautifully by Love's phrase "feeling backwards," nostalgia connotes something more than a simple remembrance of the past; it is a relation to the past that is felt rather than thought; it is a particular kind of feeling associated with loss and change. As nostalgia is so strongly tied to memory, the act of being or feeling nostalgic is to be temporally oriented to the past. The remembered past is always better, fuller or purer than the present.

In *For 80 Days*, and screen media more generally, nostalgia is employed as a narrative and aesthetic strategy that renders queer romance as a "passing phase." As Axun and Maite rekindle their friendship, they constantly remember back to their youth. These scenes are represented in a stylised yellow hue, replicating the sepia-tone of nostalgic memory (Fig. 4.1). This is not achieved by a filter, but rather through a particular use of lighting. This produces nostalgic memory scenes that are significantly brighter and warmer than the narrative present. For instance, approximately 25 min into the film Axun returns to her home after spending the day at the hospital with Maite. Her husband waits for her in the kitchen, hoping that she will soon arrive to make his dinner. When she emerges through the doorway, they have a brief conversation about the day. The scene takes place at night; the sparse fluorescent lighting of the rustic kitchen leaves the scene feeling dark and cold. As Axun prepares the dinner, a soft soundtrack emerges and connects the present-day kitchen to her nostalgic memory.

In the warmer, brighter light of her memory, we see a record player, a young girl dressed in her father's suit and another girl in a light coloured dress. Seen in a long shot, they dance and laugh. Then, the image cuts to a shot of the two girls lying on a bed. Filmed in a more intimate medium close up, the girls discuss having crushes on boys in the village. This inevitably leads to a conversation about kissing, and the young Axun reveals that she feels embarrassed because she has never been kissed. Maite leans over and kisses her and the two girls giggle as the unsteady camera playfully

Fig. 4.1 The nostalgic scenes in *For 80 Days* (Jon Garaño and Jose Mari Goenaga, 2010) are stylised to replicate nostalgic memory

laughs along with them. Here the image cuts back to the dark and cold aesthetic of the present day. Axun lies in bed, unable to sleep. She exhales deeply and rolls over as the image fades to black.

These scenes work to ensure that queer intimacy is always distanced from the present, both narratively and aesthetically. In *Backward Glances*, Martin explores these strategies through a particular "memorial" narrative. Within this mode of representation, an older female protagonist, usually involved in an unhappy heterosexual marriage, nostalgically remembers a lost queer romance of her youth. Though Martin identifies this "memorial mode" as the dominant form of queer feminine representation in Chinese popular culture (within this context the queer girl is not an entirely marginalised figure and has been the focus of a number of recent films produced in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan), it does travel beyond national boundaries, as in *For 80 Days*. Whether being explicitly adopted or simply referenced, as both *Glee*'s Holly Holliday and *The O.C.'s* Julie Cooper do, the wistful remembrance of lost queer romance has become a staple of contemporary screen media.

As Martin argues, these are stories of queer girls "going in" rather than "coming out" and they are structured around "a central narrative logic …

of same-sex love as a temporary stage" (Martin 14). This narrative emphasises the brevity of queer romance by retrospectively and nostalgically framing queer girlhood. With key narrative events "related in the past tense" and "retrieved from the past by a reminiscent third- or first-person narrator," queer love, intimacy and desire is distanced from the narrative present (Martin 51). Further, Martin argues, the inevitability of their failed queer romances renders this mode distinctly mournful in tone, as "pathos and … yearning for an impossible love" come to constitute "the central emotional pleasures and aesthetic affects" (51).

The key implication of this retrospective frame is that queerness is routinely depicted as incongruous with futurity and subsequently relegated to a nostalgically framed past. As Martin argues, love between women is dominantly "imaginable only in youth" and thus "same-sex sexual" relations may appear in adult femininity's past, very rarely in its present, and never in its future" (6). Muñoz's work on utopias draws attention to issues of futurity that resonate particularly well with this "memorial" depiction of queer girlhood. "Queers," writes Muñoz, "within the dominant culture are a people without a future. They are cast as people who are developmentally stalled, forsaken, who do not have the complete life promised by heterosexual temporality" (98). There is no viable queer future for protagonists of the "going-in" narrative. Films are told from the perspective of adult heterosexuality and emphasise "socially mandated heterosexual conclusions" (Martin 6). This, coupled with the retrospective framing, temporalises queer girlhood and renders queerness as a brief interruption in the developmental teleology of normative heterosexuality.

Yet it must be noted that the "memorial mode of representation" does not valorise heteronormative futures. Instead, it typically constructs an image of unhappy heterosexual adulthood. This is a significant contrast to long held cultural associations between queerness and unhappiness. As Sara Ahmed argues in *The Promise of Happiness*, published in 2010, it is difficult to separate images of "the good life" from heterosexuality in that heterosexual love has become "about the possibility of a happy ending; about what life is aimed toward, as being what gives a life direction and purpose, or as what drives a story" (90). Ahmed further explores the way that certain "happiness scripts" orient subjects towards heterosexuality—that is, "for girls, you must become a woman by finding your happiness in the happiness of a good man" (90–1). Explaining this further, she describes these kinds of happiness scripts as "straightening devices, ways of aligning bodies with what is already lined up" (91). To deviate from

these heterosexual lines is to threaten happiness, and queer characters are often characterised as unhappy because of such deviation. The queer life, according to Ahmed, is thus constructed as an unhappy life, as it is "a life without the 'things' that make you happy, or as a life that is depressed as it lacks certain things" (93).

Significantly, the "memorial mode of representation" does not equate queerness with unhappiness. The unhappy life at the core of this mode is often filled with the "things" that Ahmed suggests are culturally linked to happiness: a spouse, children and domestic privacy. It is this connection between mandated heterosexual futures and unhappiness that leads Martin to read a potential for "complex ideological function" within this mode of representation (7). For Martin, the sadness with which the queer girl's romance is remembered "implies a critique of the social imposition of hetero-marital relations on young women as a condition of feminine adulthood" (Martin 7). That is, although the inevitable heterosexual conclusions of the going-in narrative may seem "a means of de-realising lesbian possibility," Martin argues that it is worth considering "the possibility that these narratives may complicate rather than merely reproduce … a heterocentric and developmentalist account of young women's sexuality" (7, 54). She poses the following question:

> Can we glimpse here the transfigured trace of an alternative sexual epistemology that implies not a reiteration but a critique of the familiar narrative that naturalises heterosexual union as the proper conclusion for *all* stories? (54, emphasis original)

What Martin's reading suggests is that the "memorial mode" does something more than simply reiterate the discourse of temporary homosexuality. Rather, Martin reads the mournful tone of these films and "psychic anguish occasioned by compulsory 'going-in'" as emphasising "points of profound denaturalisation" of both the heterosexual marital system and normative temporal logics (73, 7). In the "creative appropriation of generic elements of the tragic-love story" (73) and emphasis on external social pressures in framing the forced dissolution of the queer romance, Martin argues that "these stories mobilise the progressive function of memory" because their "reminiscent narrators reconstruct the latterly prohibited pleasures of adolescent feminine same-sex love through a memorial narrative that reveals its radical potential as a critique of that prohibition" (73). What Martin asserts here is that the "memorial mode of representation" contains a

critical edge through which the past is employed as a means of critiquing the present. But it is important to consider whether this critique is limited to the social structures and temporality of the past and the present. More specifically, we must ask what this means for the future of the queer girl. Extending Martin's argument, we can observe that within this mode, queerness is depicted as incongruous with futurity and subsequently relegated to the past. With the queer girl being representable only through the retrospective frame of nostalgia, this figure is stranded in this past and subsequently removed from both present *and* future.

As a result, it seems to me that the queer woman at the core of the "memorial mode of representation" mourns more than the loss of the queer relationship from her youth. Rather, in its emphasis on the tragedy of heteronormativity, the "memorial mode of representation" also mourns the loss of the queer present and the potential for a queer future. As Muñoz writes in his theorisation of queer futurity, the present is a "quagmire … the here and now is a prison house" because it is stifled by the pressures of heteronormativity (1). This is particularly true for the reminiscent queer woman of this mode of retrospective narrative. Although the queer girl may have imagined the possibilities of the future (as all teenagers do), this queer woman's present, marked by its unhappy heterosexual coupling, will always be a site of backward orientation—a site of yearning back towards the happiness, vitality, dreams and loves of youth. The going-in narrative thus both laments the lack of the present time and mourns the forever unattainable future that was glimpsed by the queer girl in the past. Through a distinctly nostalgic gaze, it mourns the dreams of a present that could have been and the promises of a future that might have lain ahead. But must retrospective narratives always function in this manner? Are there ways of employing this cinematic storytelling technique to enable a more productive view of queer girlhood or to imagine a queer future for this nostalgically framed figure? To answer these questions, it is necessary to further explore nostalgia as a critical concept and to question how these understandings might allow us to understand the queer potential of this feeling.

Thinking Nostalgically, Feeling the Past: Unpacking Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a particular temporal orientation or feeling in which a nostalgic person longingly yearns for the past. However, this past is always conceived as an ideal—it is warmer, happier or more innocent than the present

day. Though now dated, Jean Starobinski's seminal essay "The idea of nostalgia" traces the term from its seventeenth-century medical origins to usage in the mid-1960s. Providing a useful contextualisation to current understandings of nostalgia, this essay powerfully demonstrates linkages between nostalgia, feeling and loss. Beginning with Johannes Hofer's *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia*, Starobinski explains how nostalgia is associated with the loss of a particular place. Hofer believed that many young Swiss soldiers became nostalgic while abroad because they had not left home before. For Hofer, nostalgia was a disorder of the imagination, a disease caused by absence from one's homeland (qtd. in Starobinski 87). Maintaining this connection between nostalgia and place, Jean-Jacques Scheuchzer argued for a physiological theory of nostalgia at the beginning of the eighteenth century. His theory suggested that nostalgia was a direct result of drastic changes in atmospheric pressure:

> The Swiss live in the highest mountains of Europe. They breathe, they incorporate a light, subtle and rarified air. On descending to the plain, their bodies must undergo an increased pressure, the effect of which is all the greater because of the air inside them … offers less resistance. On the other hand, a Dutchman, born and brought up on the plain, carries within a heavy air which easily resists the pressure of the dense fog which surrounds him. At sea-level the poor Swiss are overcome by the atmospheric pressure; their blood circulates with difficulty within their small cutaneous arteries; the young suffer more because of the very suppleness of their fibres, which, for this reason, are more easily compressed. Thus, the heart, on receiving less blood becomes depressed and consequently saddened. (qtd in Starobinski 88)

Although this physiological explanation of nostalgia may now seem quite absurd, it remains a powerful and poetic vision: a heart so saddened by loss that it physically cannot beat. This striking image of the saddened heart of the nostalgic is one to return to, especially in relation to the way it is articulated through screen media's reminiscent women who nostalgically remember the queer girls they used to be.

It was Immanuel Kant who first suggested that nostalgia may not be related to place but rather time. In *Anthropologie* he wrote:

> What a person wishes to recover is not so much the actual *place* where he passed his childhood but his youth itself. He is not straining toward something which he can repossess, but toward an age which is forever beyond his reach. (qtd in Starobinski 94, emphasis original)

By the end of the eighteenth century the perception of nostalgia as a physical condition faded into this understanding and by the end of the nineteenth century "the desire to return los[t] … its literal sense" as it was internalised (Starobinski 114). It is important that nostalgia is understood not as a fixed concept but rather as constantly evolving. Again acknowledging the lineage of the term, Starobinski outlines a more recognisable definition at the conclusion of his essay:

> Nostalgia no longer designates the loss of one's native land, but the return toward the states in which desire did not have to take account of external obstacles and was not condemned to defer its realisation. In the case of the civilised man, who is no longer rooted in a particular place, it is not the uprooting which causes trouble; it is rather the conflict between the exigencies of integration in to the adult world and the temptation to conserve the unique status of the child. (103)

A number of these ideas on nostalgia are expressed within the retrospective narrative of *For 80 Days*, the film discussed at the opening of this chapter. Throughout the film, both of the 70-year-old protagonists warmly remember back to a place of their childhood: the small town where they both grew up. However, it is not this place that they wish to return to. Rather, the nostalgic memories of their adolescent romance is reflective of the conflict that both Kant and Starobinksi describe—between the adult world and the unique freedoms of adolescence—and suggests a yearning for the time of youth itself. For Axun in particular, this past is especially linked to freedom, as her present-day narrative is associated with having to look after her increasingly frail husband. However, beyond the simple translation of these ideas to the screen, it is important to ask how the twists and turns of etymology come to bear on the way nostalgia is understood in contemporary discourse and adopted within contemporary screen culture. What this understanding might offer us is a means of exploring the queer potential of this retrospective feeling.

In her book *On Longing*: *Narratives of the Miniature*, *the Gigantic*, *the Souvenir*, *the Collection* published in 1993, Susan Stewart describes nostalgia as "the desire for desire" and argues that by virtue of this, nostalgia is "always ideological" (23):

> Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as felt lack. Hostile to history and its invisible origins, nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality. (23)

As Stewart reminds us, the past that is nostalgically remembered never actually exists. Rather, it is constructed as a utopian narrative, continually reminding us of the things that the present lacks; it is a past that only ever exists as "ideological reality" (23). This is the potentially radical aspect of nostalgia that Martin attributes to the same-sex romance in Chinese cinema. Nostalgic sadness for a lost object or time is inherently "inauthentic" according to Stewart because it "does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience" (23). The nostalgic filter of memory is always already a narrative or a fiction of the past, one that can be accessed only by looking or feeling backwards.

Within contemporary screen culture, these ideas about nostalgia and narrative are also expressed within what Lesley Speed terms "the nostalgic teen film"—a genre "informed by [an] adult perspective" that idealises youth (par. 25). Speed argues that because the nostalgic teen film perceives adolescence from a distance, it is "less concerned with historical detail than with attaching significance to the past" (par. 6). Thus, in analysis of films such as *Stand by Me* (dir. Rob Reiner, 1986) and *American Graffiti* (dir. George Lucas, 1974) Speed emphasises the way that teen screen culture "fetishises historical distance," revealing tensions between "youth and adulthood at the level of narration" which are understood as "the site of a quest to contain adolescence" (par. 6; par. 1). This fetishized past of the nostalgic teen genre wears the "utopian face" that Stewart discusses, continually reminding the present of its incongruity with an illusory "better" past that never actually existed. As Stewart further argues, because it is "enamoured of distance," the nostalgic narrative must always lack "fixity and closure"; closing the gap between past and present "would cancel out the desire that is nostalgia's reason for existence" (Stewart 145). When traced to the teen film, this is evident within the irreconcilable "juxtaposition of idealised youth and idealising adulthood, past pleasure and present nostalgia, teen culture and its containment" that is unique to the teen genre (Speed par. 31). Like most cinema, the teen genre comprises screen content created by adult writers, directors and producers. In creating fictional narratives of youth, these creatives often base their diegeses on idealised versions of their own youthful experiences. The resulting films, written from the "idealising" perspective of adulthood, necessarily yearn for a long-lost utopian past.

Building on this conception of nostalgia as a continuous search for a lost object, Rey Chow specifically discusses nostalgia as a cinematic device. Through a close reading of Stanley Kwan's *Rouge* (1987) and Wong Karwai's *Happy Together* (1997), Chow conceptualises "the nostalgic filmic

image" and discusses nostalgia alternately as "a loop, a throw, a network of chance" and a "wishful imagining of, or insistent gesturing back to, an originary state of togetherness" ("A souvenir of love" 61; "Nostalgia of the new wave" 36). Again nostalgia is positioned as a temporal orientation that is turned towards a utopian past, though Chow illuminates that it may also operate on an aesthetic or narrative level. As a narrative gesture, nostalgia may be evoked through specific use of non-linear editing, warm lighting and *mise-en-scène*; the stylised image (often in flashback) comes to represent nostalgia's stylised memory. Though aesthetically separated from the narrative present, a nostalgically framed past is instantly recognisable.

Tapping into a number of these ideas, the queer potential of nostalgia has recently been discussed by a number of scholars. Linking the nostalgic modality to the retelling of queer childhoods, Elspeth Probyn discusses nostalgia as a way to "queer the past in the present" (457). Probyn's conception of nostalgia is similar to Stewart's in that it emphasises the impossibility of return. Against the common desire to discuss childhood as a point of origin for queer identity, as is emphasised within many coming-out stories, Probyn posits nostalgic modalities as a means of "rewinding" but not "recounting" via "a chronological chain that links the present to a fixed past" (458). In this way, Probyn's nostalgic modality has a particularly queer function as it ultimately works to dissolve "the pretense of truth" in our understandings of sexuality (458).

Linda Anderson comments on the queer potential of nostalgia, linking its temporality to Freud's concept of uncanny by arguing that it "invokes the uncanny effects of time" (71). Anderson emphasises the "disjunctive temporality" of nostalgia by arguing that it is "characteristically turned towards a past conceived as fuller and more authentic than the present" (71). This, according to Anderson, "confronts the impossibility of making the past and the present cohere into a single narrative line" (71). That is, in yearning for something "fuller and more authentic" in the past, nostalgia denaturalises the teleological relationship between past and present.

This description is similar to how Love describes the relationship between the past and present in *Feeling Backward*. In this book, Love points to an inextricability between past and present, arguing that the present (and future) will always be bound up in past events. Anderson's argument extends this perspective, pushing it to its limits. She explains that "nostalgia denies the present for the sake of an *impossible* past; it yearns for an *irrecoverable* point of origin before the subject's inscription in time" (71, emphasis added). Thus, according to Anderson, although

the present and past are inextricably linked by nostalgia, they cannot be coalesced into unity. She continues, arguing that in "its desire for unity, it [nostalgia] has the effect of generative distance and discontinuity" (71). That is, in desiring the present to be "as good" as the lost past, nostalgia yearns for coherence between past and present, feeling backwards to an irretrievable past while discounting the pleasures of the present. However, in this "desire for unity" between past and present, nostalgia has the opposite effect as, according to Anderson, it opens up discontinuities of time and generates "a disjunctive temporality where time is always different from itself" (71). This is a temporality that should be considered queer. Thus, Anderson argues, "nostalgia accompanies the subject whose choices and identifications are no longer fixed and predetermined; unmoored from the narrative of cause and effect, nostalgia finds itself free to wander in perverse ways" (72).

To describe nostalgia alongside the idea of wandering proves to be particularly productive in illuminating its queer potential. In his book *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Umberto Eco uses the metaphor of the forest to examine narratives and narration, reminding readers of the pleasures of wandering. He writes:

> There are two ways of walking through a wood. The first is to try one or several routes (so as to get out of the wood as fast as possible) … the second is to walk so as to discover what the wood is like and find out why some paths are accessible and why some are not. (27)

Eco's first manner of walking through the wood and thus his first mode of narration is that of linearity. This narrative form is tied to ideas of cause and effect, ultimately emphasising the importance of progression as the goal is to reach a logical point of conclusion—"to get out of the wood" (Eco 27). This method of storytelling valorises, as Probyn argues, a conception of temporality in which there is only one "line of movement" that "goes from the present to the past in order to justify the present" (458). Probyn argues that the linear narrative is limiting, as it does not produce anything in the present, instead merely reproducing "the present as an effect of the past, of past causes" (458).

In contrast, Eco's second type of walking values a kind of non-linear exploration that can most easily be described as "wandering"—"to walk so as to discover" (Eco 27). Because it is no longer tied to the logical goals of linearity, it results in a different kind of satisfaction. Wandering is thus

similar to what Anderson argues of nostalgia: it is "unmoored from the narrative of cause and effect" (72). De-emphasising progression in favour of non-linear exploration, this linkage between wandering and nostalgia allows for an understanding of its queer potential. If, as Anderson writes, nostalgia is "free to wander in perverse ways" as it "accompanies the subject whose choices and identifications are no longer fixed" or, as Stewart suggests, nostalgia must always lack "fixity and closure," it can be thought of as a queer relation to temporality or a way of queering temporality (Anderson 72; Stewart 145).

Probyn conceptualises a bifurcated movement of remembering that is particularly useful for this discussion. Engaging with Deleuze's thesis that "the "present" that endures divides at each "instant" into two directions, one oriented and dilated toward the past, the other contracted, contracting toward the future," Probyn argues that there are two lines at work in memory (*Bergsonism* 52). While one of these is oriented towards the past, the other is oriented to the future in which, as Deleuze argues, "millions of vibrations or elementary shocks [condense] into a felt quality … the 'tensing' of things into a line of becoming" (*Bergsonism* 87).

In order to move into other, queer modes of becoming, Probyn argues that one must redirect the line of the past alongside the line of the future "so that contraction and recollection exist simultaneously" (Probyn 460). For Probyn, this is precisely what a queer use of nostalgia can achieve as it:

> twists and turns inside-out and outside-in generations of memories. It renders history as a narrative line that … refuses depth. It draws everything to the surface, it spreads the past across the present, it makes the present as flexible as a well-sprung dance floor. (462)

As I have noted, the project of queering involves the valorisation of fluidity and indeterminacy: it is about finding gaps, ruptures and mismatches as much as it is about locating incoherencies and challenging the apparent stability of normative binaries. As a means of queering temporality, the nostalgic perspective pulls the past and present out of their stable chronological relationship and, refusing depth, draws them alongside each other. Although, as Love argues, the past may be inextricably linked to both the present and the future, a queer use of nostalgia rejects a linear, chronological unity between these temporal moments. For Love, the future and present will always be bound with the temporality of the past, because the past is to be simultaneously memorialised and revered.Yet for both

Anderson and Probyn, nostalgia's desire for unity between the past and present actually works to open up discontinuities of time. Here nostalgia is explicitly tied to queer aims. It offers a means of queering the past. This is because nostalgia scrambles the linearity of life, revealing the incompatibility between past and present, and most importantly, highlighting the impossibility of drawing a single narrative line between them. Queer nostalgia, as Probyn suggests, would reject teleology by forcing the present and the past alongside one another. This nostalgia is most interesting and offers a means of challenging the valorised linear and progressive qualities of heteronormative temporality. It is thus important to question how this nostalgia, a queer nostalgia, might be employed within screen texts and what this might mean for the queer girl.

"Looking Forward" and "Feeling Backward" in *Butterfly*

In contrast to the first mode of retrospective narration, typified by *For 80 Days*, Yan Yan Mak's *Butterfly* presents its audience with complex relations between past, present and future, challenging the dominant temporalisation of the queer girl as a memorialised figure of the past. *Butterfly* is Mak's second feature film and had international premieres at the Venice Film Festival (2004) and San Jose Cinequest Film Festival (2005). It was financed by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Filmko Company and distributed primarily through the international festival circuit. Based on Taiwanese writer Xue Chen's novel *The Mark of the Butterfly*, *Butterfly* centres on the character of Flavia (Josie Ho), a high school teacher living a fairly mundane married life complete with sterile apartment, husband and small child. Encountering a younger woman, Yip (Tian Yuan), in a supermarket, Flavia remembers a lost queer romance of her youth that was forcibly ended by her parents. The film follows her budding relationship with Yip alongside the remembered relationship from Flavia's past in parallel yet intertwining narratives. On a narrative level, the film is organised around the structures of nostalgia as Chow describes it—that is, nostalgia as "insistent gesturing" and "a loop, a throw" ("Nostalgia of the new wave" 36; "Souvenir of love" 61). As Martin notes, the memorial mode is established within this film via its flashback structure as "the film proceeds contrapuntally, with scenes of a thirty-something Flavia in the present with Yip alternating with flashback

scenes of a youthful Flavia with Jin around 1989" (158). This structure is first illustrated in the title sequence of the film and emphasised by the employment of two contrasting film stocks: one high definition, the other Super 8.

The film does not open with Flavia, but rather with Yip. The first shot moves along her body as she lounges around a bedroom in her underwear, singing softly to the camera as if it were a lover. The high-definition film stock captures the natural lighting, rendering palpable the intimacy of this opening shot. Beneath Yip's voice the soundscape is composed of a faint clicking sound. While this may be the sound of a fan or air-conditioner, it is also reminiscent of film running through a projector. It is this subtle soundscape that links the first image to the second as the following shot employs a contrasting Super-8 film stock in its depiction of the young Flavia and Jin giggling as they climb a Portuguese fort in Macau. Though its relation to the first shot is not immediately made clear, Martin describes this shot as "one of the most potent signifiers of the film's pervasive memorialism … [an] image of youthful ecstasy, recalled through memory's stylising filter" (159). This second shot both looks and sounds very different to the first. Visually, the Super-8 film "is grainy, high-contrast, and dominated by red and yellow tones" (Martin 158). On an auditory level this shot provides a further contrast that is not commented on by Martin: it is quiet but not silent, as if being projected in an empty cinema. The contrast between film stocks is emphasised from the outset of the film and, throughout the film, the look and sound of the Super-8 comes to be associated with remembrance, the past and, significantly, nostalgia. After all, what is nostalgia if not an example of "memory's stylising filter"? (Martin 159).

This first sequence emphasises the temporal lines running through this film. These lines do not exist in linearity (as a single linear timeline based on cause and effect that goes on infinitely) but rather run parallel to each other, occasionally bumping together and progressively getting more tangled. Following the title, the film returns to the high-definition film stock, cutting to an adult Flavia reading a poem to a class of students. A series of cross-cuts between the crispness of Flavia's present-day classroom and grainy flashbacks to Flavia's past follow before the narrative progresses, though it is not until much later in the film that the link between these two aesthetic modalities is made explicit.

Another aesthetic is introduced approximately 5 min into the film, which serves to further complicate the temporal lines. Early on in the film, Flavia meets Yip in the grocery store. Pushing her trolley through

the aisles, Flavia notices Yip sitting on the floor. A point of view shot captures Yip brazenly eating food that she has not paid for. The camera's intent gaze reveals that the younger woman immediately intrigues Flavia, so when a shop assistant accuses Yip of theft, it is not surprising that Flavia steps in.

In the following scene, the two women have a meal at a nearby café. This is where they introduce themselves. An establishing shot captures the two women sitting at a table before the image cuts closer in shot/reverse shot pattern. Yip explains that her girlfriend evicted her after an argument, Flavia sensibly criticises her theft from the grocery store. Each shot, and its reverse, is precise and expresses a measured rhythm within the conversation. As Yip turns to order a coffee, the rhythm is startled as the image briefly cuts Flavia's point of view: a subtle filter and unsteady camera distance this from the prior omniscient perspective. This fleetingly returns us to the stylised Super-8 film stock from the opening sequence. Immediately following this intrusion, the image reverts to the shot/reverse shot pattern and reveals Flavia's expression—she appears stunned, as if she has seen something unexpected. It is here that the third aesthetic is introduced: The following shot is distanced aesthetically from the narrative present and reveals a teenage girl in a white school uniform. Filmed in high-definition film stock, though with warmer lighting that is suggestive of a nostalgic frame (as in *For 80 Days*, the heightened yellow and orange hues within the scene encourage this inference), the girl sits in a classroom and receives a note from a student behind her. She opens it, revealing the text "Did the others say you look beautiful when you're sleeping—Jin." She smiles and we return to earlier scene between Flavia and Yip. A few moments later, the warmer memory again intrudes into the present-day narrative as we see Flavia's first love Jin writing the note. The Super-8 film stock also intrudes into the present-day narrative via a brief point of view shot of Flavia's hands. Gradually, the connection between the high-definition film stock and its two nostalgic counterparts (the warmer lighting and Super-8 stock) are made more explicit.

In addition to its aesthetic prominence within both the first sequence and the greater film, the Super-8 stock is emphasised within the narrative itself as it comes to be associated with Jin, Flavia's first love. To be specific, Jin is marked by her fascination with film itself, in terms of both materiality and spectatorship, throughout the entirety of the film. This linkage is established in the multitude of shots of Jin recording things with her own Super-8 camera and further emphasised via a poster of Jean-Luc Godard

that features prominently in the *mise-en-scène* of the apartment where Jin and Flavia spend much of their time. Many of the flashback sequences feel as if they were captured by Jin's camera, captivatedly recording the expressions of the young Flavia. However, shots of Jin and Flavia giggling as they climb the old fort, gazing over the cityscape and lying together in the schoolyard also complicate this. With Jin present within these images, they are obviously not her recordings. Yet the motif of the camera is present throughout and the warm, nostalgic tones of these flashbacks are contrasted with the sharpness of the 35-mm film stock that is used to signify the present. And thus, in some moments at least, the camera and feel of the Super-8 film stock come to signify a nostalgic past, distanced visually and aurally from the narrative present.

Although this may initially seem to illuminate a simple delineation between past and present, the linkage between the contrasting film stocks and what they signify is quickly complicated, and in contrast to the strict narrative logic of Martin's "memorial mode of representation," *Butterfly* does not render the queer girl an elusive figure of the past. Martin observes that as the film progresses, the memorial mood signalled by the Super-8 film "subsequently spreads to incorporate ostensibly *non*-memorial elements of the film's narrative"—notably scenes depicting Flavia's new relationship with Yip in the present—and that this "enables not only a memorialising of the present ... but also, and more radically, a '*present-ing*' of the past" (159; 161, emphasis original). However, in my viewing of this film, this complex structure is signalled from the outset. This is achieved through the sound of the projector in the opening shot and a single point of view shot of Flavia's hands in the present, seen through "memory's stylising filter": the Super-8 film stock (Martin 159).

The relations between past and present are complicated further throughout the film because, although we may infer that the different modalities signal different temporalities, this is never explicitly explained. For instance, throughout the first part of the film, Flavia's present romance with Yip is represented alongside the relationship from her adolescence without any narrative exposition. Here the past and present run parallel to each other but the lack of exposition renders these separate narratives. That is, despite the apparent linkage between the Super-8 film stock and the past, at first it may seem that the stories are connected only in their similar content: that of the desire between girls and/or women. These two storylines do collide, however, and this occurs mid-way through the film in a scene in which Flavia sits alone with a projector and watches footage

of her past romance with Jin. In this scene, Flavia's youthful, queer memories are literally projected into the cold, dark living room of her heterosexual present as she holds her knees close to her chest, bracing herself against the emotions of her past.

Rather than presenting the film's narrative in a linear format, the constant cross-cutting between the two storylines of past and present illuminates a more complex temporal structure. Capitalising on film's inherent capacity to simultaneously express multiple temporalities via parallel editing, this proves to be an interesting alternative to the memorialised figure of the queer girl, who is so often relegated to memory and the past. Offering something more akin to Probyn's conception of the queer potential of nostalgia—"it draws everything to the surface, it spreads the past across the present, it makes the present as flexible as a well-sprung dance floor" (462)—by emphasising the cross-cuts between these two storylines, *Butterfly*'s representation of queer girls twists and turns through both past and present. As the film progresses, the temporal lines become more tangled as the Super-8 film stock is used to depict scenes set in the narrative present and the 35-mm film is employed within scenes from the past. Complicating things further, the film continually cuts back and forth between these two modes of image, often visualising the same shot with both. Of the employment of the Super-8 film stock, the director comments:

> People have asked me about the Super-8 sections, because it's actually quite weird: not all of those sections were shot by Jin; some of them happen in the present. The reason I did it like that was because for Flavia, the sound and the image-feel of the Super-8 film are linked with the time she was with Jin. Although Jin didn't shoot all [of the Super-8 sections] herself, for Flavia, that kind of sound and image are connected with the most important time of her life, when she was young, so now, when she meets Tian Yuan (Yip), the same feeling, the same colours, the same sound come up again. (Mak cited in Martin 159)

As Mak indicates, it is not only within the realm of the visual that the film expresses a complex relation to temporality, as the parallel narratives of past and present also converge and tangle aurally. The soundscape of the opening sequence is good example of this; the subtle sounds of the projector running in the opening shot link the past to the present before that connection between film and the past is established. In addition to this, recurring bars of Nirvana's "Smells like Teen Spirit" link the film to

a globalised youth culture and act as an aural gesture to the past, linking the two temporal lines in a number of scenes. A key example of this occurs when Flavia and Jin drink in a bar together. In this scene, filmed in the high-definition 35-mm film stock, a man attempts to hit on Flavia but she ignores him and kisses Jin as Nirvana emerges on the soundtrack. A similar scene is enacted when Flavia meets Yip in the club where her band plays. The name of the club—"Dusk til Dawn"—is evocative of those two parts of the day in between light and dark when all manner of things are possible. Immediately preceding Flavia and Yip's first sex scene, the employment of the music signals an intrusion of the past into the present narrative. And, like the opening shot of the film, the sex scene following is underscored with the subtle sounds of the projector.

In her examination of the "memorial mode," Martin argues that memorial narratives can carry with them a radical potential that illuminates "the way in which memory actually links and melds, rather than separates, past and present" (161, 163). Foregrounding this through its nostalgic aesthetic, aural gestures and constant cross-cutting between storylines, *Butterfly* frustrates clear distinctions between past and present, confronting the dominant temporalisation of the figure of the queer girl as a memorialised figure of the past. Through its complex temporal structures, *Butterfly* also challenges the valorisation of linear and sequential progression within heteronormative temporality.

It might be tempting to leave it at this, and suggest that the complex structures of the film remove the queer girl from the depths of the past. After all, this challenges the dominant temporalisation of the queer girl as "a passing phase." Flavia *is* a significant figure because her queerness extends from the film's diegetic memory into its present. Indeed, in her discussion of *Butterfly*, Martin finds it notable that the film insists "on the possibility of actually realising memory's yearned-for utopia in the present" (Martin 163). Leung also comments on this, arguing that *Butterfly* is unique in that "the queer time of girlhood is allowed to develop into a narrative of adult lesbian identity" (58). However, this is not the only challenge that the film poses to the dominant temporalisation of the queer girlhood.

Beyond its depiction of a queer present for Flavia, *Butterfly* also comments on issues of queer futurity. More specifically, the film's queer nostalgic mode forces the memories of the past, events of the present and dreams of the future alongside one another, confronting the normative temporal logics of the present with a queer past and future. In foregrounding

Flavia's nostalgic memories, the film constructs the past as a useful means of imagining a queer future. This is best exemplified in the scene in which Flavia's memories are projected before her. Colliding these temporal moments through the literal projection of past into present, Flavia is then able to make a decision regarding her future and subsequently leaves her husband.

Muñoz argues that, "heteronormative culture makes queers think that both the past and the future do not belong to them" (*Cruising Utopia* 112). "All we are allowed to imagine," he argues, "is barely surviving in the present," but sometimes "the past, or at least, narratives of the past, enable utopian imaginings of another time and place that is not yet here but nonetheless functions as a doing for futurity, a conjuring of both future and past to critique presentness" (*Cruising Utopia* 112, 106). In *Backward Glances*, Martin argues that the mournful tone of the memorial schoolgirl romance can offer a critique of the social structures of the present. Through a queer nostalgic gaze, *Butterfly* also offers something else. Through constant cross-cutting between different modalities of image, *Butterfly's* nostalgic gaze acts as a mechanism through which the past is used to imagine a future. This future is queerer than both the past and the present. The non-linear temporal structures at the heart of *Butterfly's* mode of storytelling allow this film's critical edge to transcend the present and comment on the potential for a utopian, queer futurity. Confronting the heteronormative present with "visions of a better future … [and] images of a longed-for past," the film pulls the past and the present out of their stable chronological relationship, paralleling the events of the past and present as a means of imagining "another time and place that is not yet here" (Radstone 112; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 106). With the new romance of the present, the past is revisited for Flavia but not repeated and this opens avenues for new, alternate conceptions of the future. Far from being reduced to the past, Muñoz writes that "the future is queerness' domain":

> We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalising rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never

> settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing. (*Cruising Utopia* 1)

Butterfly challenges the dominant relegation of the subjectivity and experience of the queer girl to the past and expresses this figure through complex temporal structures. However, rather than offering a mere example of Muñoz's theory of queer futurity, I argue that the film acts as a model of it as well as of queer spectatorship. The film models a different way of "looking backwards" and is thus able to both look at and imagine the queer girl radically through this filter. To borrow from Muñoz, Flavia's present is undoubtedly a heteronormative "prison house" but her queer memories are the reason she can escape it. Many times throughout the film we are witness to Flavia's present, divided "at each "instant" into two directions" as Deleuze discusses through Bergson (*Bergsonism* 52). One of these is always oriented towards the past and the other towards a potential future. In foregrounding the nostalgic memories of its protagonist, the film casts the lines of the past, present and future as parallel. Pulling these temporal moments out of linear unity, the film is able to confront the heteronormative pressures of the present with the queer memories of the past and the dreams of a queer future. To borrow Love's phrase again, for Flavia in particular, the act of "feeling backward" to the queer experiences of her past is the means by which she is able to "look forward" to a queer life of the future. As Alvin Wong argues, the film "suggests that it is precisely by remembering a lesbian 'history' that Flavia can claim her own present and future identity as a lesbian subject" (314). Her queerness is thus the thing that "propels her onward," the thing that allows her to "dream and enact new pleasures," the thing that lets her "feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (Muñoz 1). It is queerness, or rather the nostalgic memories of queerness, that enables Flavia to break free from the confines of her unhappy normative, heterosexual life and imagine a utopian future.

In contrast to *For 80 Days*' elderly protagonists who remain caught in a nostalgic mode of being, oriented towards the past and moving nowhere, *Butterfly* imagines a queer future as a means of escaping the "quagmire of the present" and of heteronormativity (Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* 1).

At the conclusion of the film we see Flavia looking at the footage of her youth for a second time. Framed in a similar manner to the earlier sequence, this shot provides a beautiful contrast with which to illustrate the bifurcated movement of memory at the centre of this film. The second shot appears warmer, happier. Where the furniture in the first shot was angular and sterile, the second feels homely. This is further emphasised in the juxtaposed expressions on Flavia's face: in the first she cries with despair, her bottom lip quivering as tears run down her cheek. In contrast, the second shot is filled with her smile as she laughs along with her memories. Literally "distilled from the past," Flavia's celluloid memories are projected once again into her present. However, this time it feels as if they are also being projected into her future (Figs. 4.2 and 4.3).

Fig. 4.2 Mid-way through *Butterfly* (Yan Yan Mak, 2004), Flavia watches the footage of her youth and braces herself against the trauma of her past

Fig. 4.3 At the end of *Butterfly* (Yan Yan Mak, 2004), Flavia watches the footage a second time and it feels as if the memories are being projected into her future

CHAPTER 5

On Boredom, Love and the Queer Girl: *My Summer of Love*, *Show Me Love*

The protagonist of Pawel Pawlikowski's *My Summer of Love*, working class tomboy Mona (Nathalie Press), is bored. Bored with her life, her boyfriend and her only living relative, older brother Phil (Paddy Considine), she wiles away her summer in the Yorkshire Dales by kicking up dust. Embodying a kind of bored lethargy, she spends her time aimlessly rolling down hills on a motorbike with no motor, dust swirling around her feet as she drags them along the ground. This film opens with a shot of Mona alone in a shadowy bedroom, drawing on the wall in dark pencil. She begins delicately but her strokes gradually become violent as a portrait of a girl, composed of red and black, emerges beneath her fingertips. Moments later, she pauses and stands before the portrait as the title of the film appears: *My Summer of Love*. Hand-drawn against this image, the phrase could just as easily be a title for the portrait on the wall. The scene then cuts to black and is re-established in a new setting, temporally and spatially distinct from the bedroom: a green field on a hazy summer day. This is where Mona's "summer of love" begins. She lies in the sunshine in an empty field, an upside-down extreme close-up revealing half of her face. Tall stalks of grass surround her and, in the centre of the frame, her eye blinks in the fluctuation between sunlight and shade. Thin shadows fall across her face. With the sound of something approaching, Mona's eye opens and an upside-down, point-of-view shot reveals a dark haired girl on a white horse. The arrival of this character, Tamsin (Emily Blunt), quite literally turns Mona's world upside down, rupturing her dreary summer of teenage boredom with a dangerous liaison: a queer relationship.

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With a tagline warning that "the most dangerous thing to want is more," *My Summer of Love* offers a salient example of the transience of queer romance within contemporary screen media. Beyond its role as advertisement, reflected within this tagline is cultural anxiety surrounding queer relationships and adolescence. Quite explicitly, the marketing for this film about an intense but short-lived relationship between two girls speaks to the danger of queer relationships: that they might last longer than "a passing phase."

This chapter is animated around the linkage between the representation of queerness as "a passing phase" and the experience of boredom. After all, the brief queer relationship at the heart of *My Summer of Love* is tied quite explicitly to the boredom of the film's protagonist, Mona. To explore this, I identify two modes of representation within the teen genre that represent queer girls alongside boredom. As I will demonstrate, the first of these focuses on a protagonist's experience of boredom and positions queerness as a temporary distraction. The second mode, however, adopts an aesthetic of boredom through a strategic employment of soundtrack, narrative time, performance and visual composition that emphasises repetition and containment as a means of accessing the queer potential of boredom's threshold. As I will demonstrate within my analysis of Swedish director Lukas Moodysson's 1998 film *Show Me Love/Fucking Åmål*, queerness and boredom are linked within this mode by a structure and aesthetic that both embrace and transcend boredom through the possibility of queer love and the subsequent potential for queer happiness.

The Bored Queer Girl: *The O.C.*, *My Summer of Love*

Within many teen films and television series, adolescent characters seem plagued by a particular feeling or mood: a restless and unrelenting boredom. Adam Phillips considers this to be a universal experience of youth, or at least a universal memory of what it feels like to be young. He writes:

> Every adult remembers, among many other things, the great ennui of childhood, and every child's life is punctuated by spells of boredom: that state of suspended anticipation in which things are started and nothing begins, the mood of diffuse restlessness which contains that most absurd and paradoxical wish, the wish for a desire. (Phillips 68)

As Phillips muses, childhood is filled with ennui. It is marked by great "spells of boredom" that seem to last forever. Within these spells, as Phillips notes, there is a mood of restlessness. This emerges when the elongated temporality of boredom reveals a single wish: the desire to have something to do, the desire to have a desire.

For adolescents, whose temporality switches rapidly between speed and slowness, this restless mood is amplified. The desire for a desire becomes desperate, and within many screen texts, this desperation ignites a range of storylines: from mild teenage rebellion, to violence and sex, substance abuse and, of course, queer experimentation. Each of these function as a way of disrupting the elongated and slow time of teenage boredom. However, it is within the last storyline queer experimentation which functions as a mode of representation, in which "the bored queer girl" emerges on our screens.

Of course, boredom has long been linked to both homosexuality and adolescence. Johann Ludwig Casper, who wrote the *Handbook of the Practice of Forensic Medicine* in 1858, was one of the first to link boredom to sexuality, albeit in relation to men. While Casper considered some people to be congenitally predisposed to homosexuality, he mused that others adopted the practice when overcome by curiosity or boredom. Sometimes, he argued, "the vice is acquired, the result of satiety or natural sexual pleasures" (331). Years later, in the late 1800s, Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* similarly theorised the "sensual" man or "libertine" who would choose a life of "perversity" after becoming bored with sexual conventions (179). Around the same time, Havelock Ellis' *Sexual Inversion* explored these ideas in relation to women and girls, arguing that homosexuality was fostered within particular settings marked by both boredom and the absence of opposite sex partners: convents, shops, factories and boarding schools. While linking boredom and sexuality, Ellis' account of adolescent same-sex attraction also draws attention to a strong affinity between boredom and adolescence. After all, long school days and monotonous classes were the primary setting for "passionate friendships, of a more or less unconsciously sexual character" to develop between girls (Ellis np).

Many have drawn similar affinities between boredom and the elongated temporalities of adolescence. Consider Arthur Schopenhauer's claim, for instance, that the feeling of boredom diminishes with age (qtd. in Starobinski 16). Phillips' account of boredom and psychoanalysis also draws attention to this via what he terms "the great ennui of childhood": the restlessness of great "spells of boredom" (68). Within more recent

sociological studies of adolescence, boredom is considered a locus of moral panic and is often understood as the underlying cause of antisocial behaviour. As Svendsen argues, boredom has become associated with "drug abuse, alcohol abuse, smoking, eating disorders, promiscuity, vandalism, depression, aggression, animosity, violence, suicide, risk behaviour, etc." (17). Within screen studies, boredom is also routinely linked to the representation of adolescence. As Charles Acland argues, boredom is one of the primary thematics of the teen genre (120). Acland observes that the psychological and social problems within teen films are most often the result of five sometimes-interrelated sets of issues. These are: "deprived childhoods associated with … the failure of the nuclear family"; "general social apathy and boredom"; "genetic causes"; "demonic possession" and "the notion that a contentious youth is a normal youth" (120–121). As Acland argues, the second of these causes, "general social apathy and boredom," is most often set in the context of "a materialistic middle- or upper-class life" and emphasises the dull monotony of middle-class life (120).

These linkages between boredom, queerness and adolescence coalesce into a mode of representation that foregrounds the figure of "the bored queer girl," a character that in actuality is quite bored and not so much queer. Within films and television series engaging with this mode of representation, the (heterosexual) girl protagonist's experience of boredom is emphasised. The desire for a desire at the heart of this boredom is temporarily satiated by queer experience. Yet the queer experience is always positioned as an experiment or rebellion and is thus rendered as a temporary distraction. Here queerness is "just a phase" as it provides a temporary reprieve from the overwhelming boredom of adolescence. And, at the conclusion of the film or television story arc, the status quo is reasserted. Typically, the protagonists return to a heterosexual relationship and, with this, both their boredom (or the conditions that prompted this feeling of elongated and vast temporality) and their queerness are successfully transcended.

Marissa Cooper from US teen series *The O.C.* is a typical example of how these associations between boredom, queerness and adolescence unite within the figure of the bored queer girl (Fig. 5.1). Airing on Fox in the USA throughout the mid-2000s, *The O.C.* was about the tumultuous lives of a group of affluent teenagers and their families. The series centred on a troubled bad-boy Ryan (Benjamin McKenzie) who is adopted by a wealthy family in the first episode. He soon makes friends with their son, Seth (Adam Brody), and falls in love with the girl-next-door,

Fig. 5.1 Marissa Cooper from US teen series *The O.C.* (Josh Schwartz, 2003–2007) is a typical example of the bored queer girl; she uses her relationship with Alex to disrupt her boredom and rebel against her mother

Marissa (Mischa Barton). In 2005, Marissa, at this stage a key figure within the popular series, was written into a romantic queer storyline with Alex (Olivia Wilde), an edgy and slightly older woman who managed the local bar.

In episode 2.09, the storyline begins as Marissa and Summer (Rachel Bilson) decide to have a "girl's night out" at the local bar to forget their boy troubles. They are soon joined by Ryan's new love interest, Lindsay (Shannon Lucio). Of course, their male counterparts and relationship dramas intrude on the night out, though in the final minutes of the episode, Marissa finds herself in Alex's apartment. Alex declares that she has had enough of both girls and guys, so she decides to watch a horror movie with Marissa. This is where the Marissa-Alex romance truly begins. Filmed in an intimate close-up, Alex leans over Marissa to retrieve a blanket. A reverse shot reveals Marissa's face: her lips form a shy smile as her eyes dart across Alex's body. When Alex returns to her seat on the sofa, she returns Marissa's gaze. In one of the most sexually charged sequences of the series, we see Alex's gaze shift from Marissa's eyes to her lips, and in reverse shot we see Marissa mirror this. Both characters are rendered

inarticulate in this moment. A few seconds later, they turn away from each other to watch the movie, though Marissa continues to shyly gaze in Alex's direction. Eventually, the camera pulls out of the scene and the episode concludes as the image fades to black.

The following six episodes followed the development and demise of the relationship. The storyline was created as a complication in the ongoing Marissa-Ryan relationship saga (though, at the beginning of the storyline Ryan too had another love interest). However, it was also, and perhaps more problematically, framed around Marissa's ongoing rebellion against her mother. By foregrounding this, Alison Burgess argues that the storyline "reified the dominance of homophobic and heteronormative discourses on popular culture" (211–212). For instance, in episode 2.14, Marissa comes out to her mother Julie. This episode takes place over the course of an unseasonal rainy day with the sounds of rain underscoring every scene. At the beginning of the episode, Julie makes breakfast in the kitchen. Marissa and Alex enter the scene, playfully and passionately kissing while Julie has her back turned. After Alex leaves, Marissa explains that Alex is "not my friend who's a girl. My girlfriend." Julie says nothing, though her startled blank expression is immediately emphasised by the cracking sounds of thunder. Later in the episode Julie confronts Marissa, explaining that she too went through "an experimental phase" in her adolescence. Marissa is unimpressed and refuses to engage in the conversation, instead packing away her belongings and moving out. Parental rebellion is further emphasised in episode 2.16 when Marissa and Alex (living together at this point) have a fight, which prompts Marissa to discuss the relationship with her friend Summer:

> Summer: I don't know, Coop. Sounds like a pretty bad fight. I mean, maybe you should just move home.
> Marissa: I can't.
> Summer: Because you love Alex, and wherever she is, that's your home?
> Marissa: Because it would make my mom too happy. (episode 2.16)

Here the question of Marissa's feelings towards Alex falls by the wayside, and the relationship is framed purely around teenage rebellion. Commenting on this, Burgess quips:

> So if it has not yet already been confirmed, here Marissa has had a total personality change in which she is no longer interested in Alex, but is instead more interested in rebelling against her mother. (223)

Though Burgess highlights the series' conflation of queer experience and teenage rebellion, closer analysis of this series reveals the key role of boredom in the motivation behind Marissa's relationship with Alex. At the beginning of the second season, Marissa is a profoundly bored character. She is bored with all aspects of her life, including her schooling, her friends and the drama of her parents' relationships. In this season she frequently skips school and is often depicted getting drunk as she luxuriates by the swimming pool at her stepfather's mansion. She also has a sexy fling with her family's gardener, mostly to spite her mother. This is when she meets Alex and although this relationship disrupts Marissa's boredom, it does not allow her to fully transcend it. After all, within this mode of representation, queer experience is merely an experiment, a rebellion, a timely distraction. As the relationship progresses over a number of episodes, Marissa finds herself alone in Alex's apartment doing chores, wandering around aimlessly and having to pay rent. Despite her queer distraction, her teenage boredom remains.

This is revealed at the beginning of episode 2.15, after Alex discovers Marissa's inability to both find an after school job and do laundry (she turns all of their clothes pink by accident). "Maybe today we could do something fun?" Marissa hopefully asks, but Alex reminds her of her work commitments and their dire financial situation. Though Marissa's face lights up when asking the question, she returns to blank disappointment when the reality of her new life is made apparent. When Alex leaves the scene, Marissa hopelessly slumps onto the pile of laundry that covers the sofa.

It is only when Marissa's feelings for Ryan are reignited and when she subsequently begins to engage with school activities that her boredom ceases. Thus, as the prototypical story goes, queer experiment or rebellion emerges as a response to an unrelenting dullness of teenage boredom. Queerness temporarily unsettles the situation that prompted this elongated boredom but the heterosexual status quo must always be affirmed. Critically, both the protagonist's boredom and their queerness are transcended in the story's conclusion. However, this occurs via the heteronormative return, which means that queerness is always framed as "just a phase"—a temporary and transient response to difficult circumstances. By presenting Marissa's queer desire as a temporary whim, the Marissa-Alex storyline ultimately works to reify heteronormative discourses. This is particularly so around issues of temporality as the series reinforces heteronormative temporal logics by ensuring queerness remains "just a phase" of Marissa's adolescence.

In fact, the idea that queerness must be temporary is even more explicitly framed when Julie approaches Ryan in episode 2.16. Her aim is to convince him to lure Marissa home but in doing so she reiterates a cultural anxiety surrounding the duration of the queer "phase." Ultimately, she attempts to realign Marissa's sexuality and does this by encouraging the Marissa-Ryan pairing and arguing that: "It's about Marissa and her future, which we can both see is slipping away from her" (episode 2.16). The rightful (heterosexual and indeed heteronormative) future comes back into focus immediately after Alex leaves the series. Marissa returns to the embrace of her ex-boyfriend Ryan and thus to the safety of normative heterosexual relationships. She begins engaging with school activities and seems be much more fulfilled. Her boredom is no longer. Commenting on this episode, Burgess observes that "with his arms around her, he offers to take her home" and argues that "in this moment, he is taking her home to her mother and she is thereby returning to heterosexuality" (225). The relationship between Marissa and Alex is rendered a rebellious or experimental phase and, in the words of Marissa's mother, simply "Marissa's latest drama weapon of torture to inflict on me" (episode 2.15). In addition to this, *The O.C.* further denies Marissa the possibility of identifying as queer or bisexual because neither Alex nor the queer "experiment" are mentioned again. Within the diegesis, Marissa's ongoing romantic connection to Ryan is affirmed while her queer dalliance with Alex is forgotten.

A variation on this means of characterising the queer girl as a bored figure is the representation of queerness as alcohol- or drug-fuelled experiment, as in the film *Thirteen* (dir. Catherine Hardwicke, 2003). This film is about an innocent high school girl who is befriended by a rebellious but popular classmate. Over the course of the film, the innocent girl is corrupted via the rebellious friend (and, of course, a range of violence, sex and drugs). More than just exploring the nature of intimate friendships the film could be said to delve into the innate "desire between best friends," and constructs queer girl desire as intoxicating and dangerous. Because of this, it has strong ties to other films that link lesbian desire to both boredom and violence such as *Sister My Sister*, *La Ceremonie*, *Heavenly Creatures*, *Fun* and *Butterfly Kiss*. These films are discussed at length in Michele Aaron's "Til death us do part: Cinema's queer couples who kill," B. Ruby Rich's "Lethal lesbians" and Anneke Smelik's "Art and murderous lesbians."

One scene in Thirteen sees the two adolescent friends getting high, kissing and violently hitting each other. As Beirne notes, "the friends' reckless and licentious behaviour causes significant problems" and the two are separated by the end of the film ("Teen lesbian desires" 260). The protagonist of *Thirteen* eventually grows up "by letting go of the possibility of a romantic/sexual relationship with … [her] desired best friend, and this is represented as necessary in order to obtain self-respect and stability" (Beirne, "Teen lesbian desires" 260). Following the temporal logic as outlined above, queer experience is equated with boredom and transcended at the conclusion of the film. This film manifests an anxiety about intoxication, boredom and queerness quite explicitly, but the temporal logics underpinning this representation are also present within numerous other films and television series, which "excuse" queerness as a result of the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Another version of this theme is articulated within *My Summer of Love*, the film that warns of the dangers associated with wanting more from queer relationships. This film follows an intense relationship between two girls over the duration of one summer. The summer period is often teeming with potential within the teen genre. It is not difficult to think of examples of the clichéd transformation narrative in which an unattractive character re-emerges after summer break as beautiful and glamorous or the male-dominated summer narrative in which the teenage protagonist discovers sex for the first time—this is demonstrated in the prototypical summer coming of age film *Summer of 42* (dir. Robert Mulligan, 1971). However, because the summer is set apart from the routine of school, it is also susceptible to elongated spells of boredom. For Mona, the protagonist of *My Summer of Love*, the summer is much like the motorcycle that she rolls around on: slow and aimless. Like Mona, Tamsin's life is filled with a vast, existential boredom. This boredom is amplified by the way the camera captures both Mona and Tamsin in their surroundings: the town is sparse and open, the streets are empty and the two girls spend the majority of the film alone (Fig. 5.2).

Further emphasising the dullness of their surroundings, the relationship between Mona and Tamsin develops amid an overwhelming focus on marriage, suburbia and heteronormative temporal logics. After fixing the motorbike, the two spend a large amount of their time observing the town. In one scene they visit a housing estate, describing it as "like LEGO" because "it's all sort of pretend." The framing and lighting of

Fig. 5.2 Teenage boredom is amplified by the aesthetics of *My Summer of Love* (Pawel Pawlikowski, 2004). In this shot from the opening moments of the film, Mona slowly rolls down a hill on her broken motorcycle. Her life, like her transportation, is slow and aimless

this scene emphasises the dull sameness of the suburban houses: similar in colour, these houses are lined up in perfect rows that seem never-ending. What is emphasised in encounters like this is the restlessness of the girls as they rail against the monotony that surrounds them. But when Tamsin asks Mona what she wants to do with her life and she responds dryly, we read her response with both humour and seriousness:

> I'm going to get a job in an abattoir, work really hard, get a boyfriend who's like … a bastard, and churn out all of these kids, right, with mental problems. And then I'm going to wait for menopause … or cancer.

While this remark is a clear critique of the normative, linear and depressing lives ahead of many of her peers, this response also contains the sad glimmer of a realisation that this is also probably the life that Mona will end up with. Intriguingly, the film does not entirely follow all of the conventions of the bored queer girl narrative, as the relationship at its core does not cease with the emergence of a heterosexual love interest—although

it is complicated by one, as Tamsin incessantly flirts with Mona's brother. Yet it still ceases at the end of the summer and the characters' individual boredoms appear to be transcended by the film's violent conclusion in which Mona attempts to strangle Tamsin before she returns to boarding school. In the film's final moments, she walks alone into the town with a smile on her face, her queerness and boredom having both dissipated.

In these instances where boredom, queerness and the figure of the queer girl are intertwined, queerness is explicitly depicted as transitory: it is an exciting but ultimately temporary solution to dreary teenage boredom. Perhaps this is because in boredom we seem to have great spells of time to waste and, as Schoonover writes, "queerness often looks a lot like wasted time, wasted lives, wasted productivity. Queers luxuriate while others work. Queer seems always to have time to waste" (73). But because boredom and queerness are seen as unproductive, they must always be overcome by a return to normative productivity. In the instance of the bored queer girl in film and television, this means a return to the (re)productive circuit and the security of heterosexual relationships. The heterosexual status quo is reasserted, time and time again.

Critical Boredom

Yet within critical theory, boredom holds a powerful place as the restless feeling has been used as a means of exploring the value of temporality. Through this, key figures such as Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer have famously commented on the critical potential of this supposedly negative emotion. Although Benjamin never defines "boredom," he uses the concept in a number of ways. Boredom comes to refer to both the ennui felt by city dwellers as well as a more productive experience that provides space for access to lost memories, missed historical opportunities and revolutionary possibilities. In *The Arcades Project*—Benjamin's most extended discussion of this topic—he focuses on a particular boredom of the street, felt by the figures of the *flâneur*, dandy and gambler: those whose lives are structured around the experience of having nothing better to do. A productive and critical form of boredom also emerges within this work, particularly through the discussion of rain. Benjamin argues that the structures of the modern city—the arcades, for instance—are responsible for the "diminishing magical power of the rain" (*Arcades* D1, 7). This is

because the arcades shelter the city dwellers, leaving them to be swept up in the rhythms of modernity. But, he further argues, rainy days can also provide a space for reflection:

> From morning until evening, one can do the same thing—play chess, read, engage in arguments—whereas sunshine, by contrast, shades the hours and discountenances the dreamer. (*Arcades* D1a, 9)

So perhaps *The O.C.* was channelling Benjamin when it linked its bored queer girl to the weather in episode 2.14 "The Rainy Day Women." This conceptualisation of boredom as a productive experience is further developed in "The Storyteller" in relation to different means of narrating experience in modernity. Here boredom is not a negative effect but rather a productive one, as it allows for the attainment of a state in which experience, in a collective mode, can be assimilated into the social world. Thus, boredom is valuable because it offers an opportunity for critical reflection on a collective scale. This reflection is where boredom's critical potential truly begins to emerge, as it provides a means of developing a critical awareness of the everyday. This is further established in a number of Benjamin's other writings. For instance, through his work on Marcel Proust, Benjamin uses boredom to discuss memory and argues that boredom can circumvent conscious searches of the past, giving access to the lost memories of the everyday. And in his discussion of the Surrealists, he argues that boredom in its critical mode allows us to shift from the interrogation of individual psychology and experience to the analysis of collective history and memory.

What is most notable about each of these works is that within them boredom is tied to a critical potential; the experience of boredom is argued to shake one out of a certainty in the convictions and assumptions that give meaning to modern life and force a confrontation with the question of how time really should be spent. As Benjamin writes:

> We are bored when we don't know what we are waiting for. That we do know, or think we know, is nearly always the expression of our superficiality or inattention. Boredom is the threshold of great deeds. (*Arcades* D2, 7)

As an impetus for or "threshold of great deeds," the experience of boredom thus forms the beginnings of an awareness of dissatisfaction with the conditions of the present that will only be overcome through the creation of alternate social conditions or a society, based as Joe Moran argues, "on true creativity and pleasure" (180).

Siegfried Kracauer's short essay "Boredom" also emphasises the critical potential of the experience of boredom within a broader discussion of modernity and the everyday. Like Benjamin, Kracauer argues that modern experience is characterised by a tension between a "vulgar boredom of daily drudgery" and leisure time in which "although one wants to do nothing, things are done to one" (331). Unlike Benjamin, however, Kracauer argues this potential to be primarily related to the self. The modern rhythm between work and leisure, argues Kracauer, has resulted in a population "pushed deeper and deeper into the hustle and bustle until they no longer know where their head is," that is, into a situation in which the social subject is alienated from the self (331).

Where Benjamin's conceptualisation of boredom focuses on figures from nineteenth-century Paris—the gambler, *flâneur* and dandy—Kracauer's boredom focuses on the cinemas and stadiums of 1920s Berlin and articulates a twentieth-century view of boredom, highlighting what Patrice Petro calls "the distracted fullness of a leisure time become empty" (66). Despite these differences, both theorists maintain that the experience of boredom is productive in that it sustains subjectivity within modern culture.

The critical potential of this mode of boredom, or what Kracauer calls "extraordinary, radical boredom," is that it opens or gives rise to a situation where one can find "the peace and quiet to be as thoroughly bored with the world as it ultimately deserves" and through which that lost self can be rediscovered (331–332). One should, as Kracauer suggests, "surrender oneself to boredom" because the experience of boredom "provides a kind of guarantee that one is, so to speak, still in control of one's existence" (334).

But boredom, in this critical mode, is not limited to discussions of modernity. More recently, Adam Phillips and Ben Anderson have also examined its critical potential. For instance, Phillips considers that the experience of boredom makes tolerable "the impossible experience of waiting for something without knowing what it could be" (77). Through analysis of childhood development, Phillips traces the shifting experience of boredom with age and posits that the boredoms of childhood are mere interruption: "after something and before something else" (75). In this respect, the boredoms of childhood are intense but usually brief. The boredoms of adulthood, however, return the subject to "the scene of inquiry," to the "poverty" of curiosity and to "the simple question, what does one want to do with one's time?" (75).

Phillips' conceptualisation of boredom illuminates the way in which the experience of boredom offers a productive means of thinking about the stagnant time of the present as it suggests alternate conceptions of the future, that is, a future when one is not bored. This form of boredom more explicitly expresses a critical edge when Phillips uses the concept to challenge developmental models of the human psyche. He argues that boredom makes us aware of the insubstantiality of linear narratives of development through which personal histories are constructed. That is, the experience of boredom has radical, critical potential when it leads to the beginning of an awareness "that you may not be leading a charmed life" after all (78). Here boredom shares an affinity with queer theory, particularly in relation to temporality. As I have noted, theories of queer temporality emphasise the ways that queer lives are structured in different ways to heterosexual lives. Queer theorists such as Edelman, Halberstam and Muñoz seek to interrogate normalised logics of temporality and destabilise linear conceptions of time. Although Phillips' research is not driven by queer aims, his argument questions temporal norms through its illumination of the ways that the experience of boredom can destabilise linear, developmental models of human psychology.

Ben Anderson also conceptualises a critical potential of boredom that shares an affinity with theories of queer temporality. Attending to the feelings that occur before and after boredom rather than the experience of boredom itself, Anderson argues that boredom is "profoundly *enabling* of a will-to-connect differently" (747, emphasis original). For a person experiencing the stasis of boredom, the moments before and after this experience can be associated with feelings of joy, hope and despair. Thus, like Benjamin, Anderson draws attention to the potentiality of boredom's threshold. Within the movement from boredom to joy or hope, Anderson locates moments of intensity that cross "thresholds of indeterminacy and momentarily reconfigure time-space" (747). For instance, in the movement between boredom and joy, Anderson argues:

> Joy, as a renewed inhabitation of the body's potential capacities that counter the lessening of boredom, may be primarily felt as an intense disruption, or discontinuity, in time-space. For example, joy moves into rupture in those circumstances where a point of suspension, boredom, dissipates suddenly into new connections that transgress, or even destroy, the durable repeated social–spatial orderings that form boredom. (747)

Beyond emphasising dissatisfaction with a given situation, this conceptualisation of boredom emphasises it as a critical force that enables a "will-to-connect differently" through transgression, rupture and the destruction of recurrent social orderings. Like Phillips, Anderson's work is not tied to queer theory but his conceptualisation of boredom is congruent with the implicit aims of a queer paradigm. Anderson argues that when the experience of boredom dissipates, new connections are formed in directions that transgress the static social orderings from which boredom emerges. Attention to this movement between boredom and joy emphasises that the awareness of boredom exposes these moments of transgression, making them a valuable point of entry into interrogation of the "durable repeated" or normative "social–spatial orderings" or logics of temporality (747).

To Anderson, hope is the movement to the "not-yet" that involves "a much more subtle re-alignment of the ephemeral insignificancies of daily life via acts of diversion, distraction or discernment" (748). Here Anderson argues that boredom can be considered a potentiality or possibility, as it is associated with a series of "non-cognitive 'coping mechanisms'" or "corporeal techniques" that he cites as accompanying the "dulling embrace of boredom" (748). Physical gestures such as fidgeting, yawning or sighing perform "a restlessness of pre-cognitive attention that manifests the *tension* of boredom" (748). Pushing the body into different relations, these acts of corporeal restlessness enable "one to get through routines or practices that have to be repeated" and speak to what Anderson refers to as the "hope for a not-yet elsewhere or elsewhen" that is internal to boredom (749). The restless tension associated with boredom is thus intimately related to an innate hope for another time and place.

Considered through this "will-to-connect differently," Anderson's boredom is thus characterised by both its expression of restless tension and its capacity to act as a critical force of transgression or rupture. This conceptualisation of boredom is congruent with the argument that Phillips articulates in relation to human psychology: that the awareness of boredom gives rise to a situation in which normative structures of temporality can be destabilised. Here, the potential of boredom is tied to its conceptualisation as a "threshold."

In this critical mode, boredom can be evoked stylistically. In relation to film, Patrice Petro argues that boredom shares affinities with the traditions of the avant-garde, "particularly those that come after political modernism and refuse its aesthetics of distraction, sensory stimulation and shock" ("After shock" 68). Petro locates this aesthetic in an "attitude of actively

passive waiting" within Andy Warhol's *Eat* (1963), *Kiss* (1963), *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire* (1964) and Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce—1080 Bruxelles* (1975). Through this, Petro argues that boredom as an aesthetic contains an impulse of provocation and calculated assault, forcing the spectator to confront their capacity to wait and question how much tedium they can stand. Thus, Petro argues that an aesthetic of boredom enables "an awareness of looking as a temporal process—bound not to a particular object but to ways of seeing" ("After shock" 68).

Petro further develops this conceptualisation in her essay "Historical ennui, feminist boredom" in which she discusses the stakes of boredom as an aesthetic. In this essay, Petro argues that much feminist filmmaking and film theory has involved both an aesthetics and a phenomenology of boredom, and she characterises this by "a temporality of duration, relentless in its repetition, and stance of active waiting, which … allow[s] for redefinition, resistance, and change" ("Historical ennui" 93). For modernists, this aesthetic of boredom provides a resistance against the banality of the present—"a restless self-consciousness" ("Historical ennui" 93). Petro argues that this kind of self-consciousness is also available to contemporary feminist theorists and, in doing so, posits boredom as valuable "in the ongoing attempt by women to create spaces for reflection, renewal and change" ("Historical ennui," 93).

Hungarian film theorist Yvette Biro also discusses the potential of boredom as an aesthetic in her book *Turbulence and Flow in Film*: *the Rhythmic Design*. Biro argues that the "experience of accelerated time" has become common currency within both contemporary culture and film. Countering this, Biro conceptualises an aesthetic of boredom embodied within the formal and narrative elements of some forms of art cinema. Through this, Biro locates film's potential to respond to the "cult of speed" with different forms of narrative and stylistic rhythms that articulate increasingly complex cinematic temporalities. For instance, Biro argues that the long shots and static camera work within Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman* articulate a "stylised time that appears natural only at first sight," creating a sense of fluidity but also accentuating duration within the film as a whole (194).

The time of boredom is referred to as "imprisoning" within Svendsen's *A Philosophy of Boredom,* but in conceptualising boredom as an aesthetic both Petro and Biro emphasise the potential of the elongated, static time of boredom to open up the possibility for alternate temporal configurations within film. When these perspectives are considered alongside

the arguments of scholars such as Anderson, Benjamin and Phillips, the critical potential of boredom truly begins to emerge. Yet it is important to question what this means for the representation of queer girls because, as I have noted, queerness and boredom have consistently been aligned as a means of emphasising queerness as "a passing phase."

Aesthetically Embracing Boredom: *Show Me Love*

Like *My Summer of Love*, Lukas Moodysson's *Show Me Love/Fucking Åmål* is about the development of a relationship between two girls in a small town. In this independent Swedish film, the setting is Åmål, a municipality in south-west Sweden—the most boring place on earth according to one of the film's principal characters. Against this backdrop, the narrative follows its two teenage protagonists, Agnes (Rebecka Liljeberg) and Elin (Alexandra Dahlström), as they begin a relationship that both embraces and transcends their exhausting adolescent boredom. The film's original title *Fucking Åmål* is reflective of the character's frustrations at the slow pace and dullness of life in this small-town setting. The English title, however, links to ideas of romantic love and comes from the pop song "Show Me Love" by Swedish singer Robyn. As Anna Westerståhl Stenport argues in *Lukas Moodysson's* Show Me Love, part of the Nordic film classics series published in 2012, the English title is "on the one hand, vague and generic—a kind of whitewashing of the intensity of the Swedish title" yet on the other hand, "the English title explicitly labels the film a love story, and suggests that love can have a performative element—it can be enacted, demonstrated and repeated" (36).

Show Me Love is, as Stenport argues, Sweden's first lesbian coming-of-age film and one of a few Swedish feature films to explicitly focus on the development of a lesbian relationship (31). The film opens with the repetitive sounds of keys being pressed on a computer. It is here that 16-year-old Agnes is introduced. Alone in her bedroom, she writes a secret wish list on her computer, presenting the audience with a brief insight into her character. Her first wish is that she won't have to have a birthday party. Her second wish is that someone named Elin will look at her. Her third and final wish is that Elin will fall in love with her. She continues to type, "I LOVE ELIN!!!!!!" as the soundtrack and the credits commence.

From the credit sequence, the image abruptly cuts to a scene involving two teenage girls, whom we later come to know as Elin and her sister Jessica (Erica Carlson). Bickering and fighting over breakfast, Elin forcefully

throws a variety of kitchen items in Jessica's direction, loudly complaining that she has drunk all of her chocolate milk. Here Elin is a character marked by such a profound, overwhelming boredom that the highlight of her day is a glass of chocolate milk in the morning. As Liese Spencer writes in a review of the film for *Sight and Sound*, Elin is thoroughly "exhausted by ennui" (52). Her extreme outburst acts as another marker of her bored, restless subjectivity, as it seems as if she is looking for any excuse to rupture the monotony of her existence.

The morning routines of these characters converge in the school setting as they congregate at their lockers. It is here that the film relates the figure of Elin to the secret words on Agnes' computer. Having established the spatial relations of the scene through a shot/reverse shot pattern capturing an argument between two girls, the camera moves to a close up of Agnes' face as she watches Elin arrive at school. This shot cuts to a mid-shot of Elin that rapidly zooms in, mimicking Agnes' gaze, before cutting back to an extended shot of a stationary Agnes looking longingly in Elin's direction. It is through this series of shots that Stenport argues Moodysson "reverses the heteronormative" Hollywood gaze and "visually *queers* the movie" (28, emphasis original). Stenport considers Moodysson's camera to queer the gaze because it puts "the object of the gaze beyond the view of the audience so that we see its effect on the gazer [Agnes]": a strategy that is repeatedly employed to represent the developing love story between the two girls (28).

In many ways, *Show Me Love* complies with the conventions of the coming-out narrative and the teen genre. Its two teenage protagonists are represented as opposites at the beginning of the film but are eventually drawn together by their mutual dissatisfaction with the confines of the small town and their profound experiences of boredom. Emphasising this, early on in the film both Agnes and Elin are depicted engaging in repetitive tasks. Their restless boredom is made palpable as Agnes writes "Elin" over and over again in her textbook and Elin rests her head on her hands and repetitively smashes a pen into her desk. Her head slumps against her desk as if the weight of her boredom is too much to carry. Following this scene, the film cuts to the school cafeteria: Agnes, bored with her homework, eavesdrops on Elin's conversations with her friends as Elin exasperatedly complains about her life. "I want to go to a rave," she initially asserts, and continues, "Or we could mug a pensioner." Finally she bashes her head on the table of the cafeteria, yelling: "You are all so boring. Everything is boring. I hate my life!" (Fig. 5.3).

Fig. 5.3 *Show Me Love* (Lukas Moodysson, 1998) represents teenage boredom as overwhelming for its young protagonists. In this shot, Elin expresses her frustration with the unrelenting boredom of smalltown life

In his essay "Youth, sexuality and the nation," Scott Henderson interprets the film as an adaptation of the typically American youth film. Although transposed to Sweden, Henderson argues that it "incorporates the same settings, styles and structures as those found in numerous Hollywood youth films" (262). Explaining this further, he writes:

> The socially outcast main character, Agnes, is attracted to the popular Elin, and the two are eventually drawn together. This takes place against familiar teen film locales and scenarios, such as school, home, and teen parties, and the action is accompanied by a soundtrack of popular songs, including the title track, sung in English by Swedish teen pop star Robyn. (Henderson 262)

Henderson further argues that the film employs a set of recognisable cinematic codes and structures, rendering the story familiar "despite the shifting of subject positions and setting" (262). However, the primary distinction between this film and the teen genre it works within is, according to Henderson, the sexuality of its main characters. A similar perspective is outlined by Jenny Bjorkland in her article "Queering the small town" in which she discusses the film in relation to the heteronormativity of

typical romance narratives. Exploring the film in detail, Bjorkland argues that while it follows the conventions of the romantic comedy, its inclusion of lesbian protagonists challenges and queers this genre (38). Employing Halberstam's concepts of queer time and place, Bjorkland asserts that the relationship between these characters queers the "genre, time and place" by showing that it is possible to express non-normative sexuality within a small-town setting that is routinely associated with heteronormative pressures.

Yet despite these linkages between *Show Me Love* and the teen genre, the film is also not a typical teen romance. And this is not only because it features queer girls as its protagonists. The film is shot on reversal film stock, meaning that the positive image is captured directly onto the original camera film rather than through the processing of negatives. The result of this is a grainy, textural image that carries with it associations of home movies and the Danish Dogme '95 movement. The uniqueness of the film is also expressed through editing and shot duration, as Driver identifies in her discussion of the film in both *Queer Girls and Popular Culture* and "Girls looking at girls looking for girls," in which she draws attention to the "patient, slow and tense quality to the shots of Agnes" (*Queer Girls* 104). Through this, she argues that the slow pacing of the film's narrative is unique in that it allows for an articulation of "the impossibilities of knowing and the joys of experiencing the unexpected," particularly around issues of sexuality and identity (*Queer Girls* 106). Although not explicitly mentioned, Driver's analysis emphasises the way in which the boredom experienced by the characters is refracted stylistically through the slow pace of the narrative and the considered manner in which the camera captures Agnes. As she notes in "Girls looking at girls," the film both narratively and aesthetically expresses "the everyday angst and frustrations of growing up in a rural environment where dreams of escape and excitement coexist alongside mundane longings for connection" (246).

In Kerry Mallan and John Stephen's analysis of the film, the unique aesthetic elements are further emphasised. Building their argument around the film's rendering of space, Mallan and Stephen argue that a preoccupation with domestic spaces emphasises the containment of the protagonists: "on the one hand [this] generates an intense mood of claustrophobia while, on the other, communicates the terrifying aloneness of the young person abjected by the 'in'-crowd" (par. 3). They further argue that the visual style of the film emphasises the claustrophobic mood of the film, as "interior domestic scenes dominate and appear spatially constrained"

(par. 11). In addition to this, the dull colour scheme of the domestic spaces within the film "serves as an iconic sign indicating the metaphorical nature of the drabness of Åmål" (par. 11).

Linking the spaces and aesthetics of the film with the concept of boredom, Mallan and Stephens argue that Elin and Agnes are positioned by Moodysson's camera as "space-bound characters, living within the claustrophobic confines of [a] small town" (par. 11). However, the two characters have different experiences of these small-town spaces. Agnes, for instance, occupies "the spatial fringe" and her "marginalisation and abjection are metaphorically expressed through camera framing and tracking" (par. 12). Elin, on the other hand, as a popular and desirable figure within the diegesis, occupies the "spatial centre" (par. 12). But when she falls in love with Agnes, she "finds herself dislocated, both within herself and her home town" (par. 12). Because they identify the film as a coming-out narrative, Mallan and Stephens draw attention to the film's intersections between space and sexuality. Coming out is thus a spatial strategy, a means of challenging the confined spaces of the town. Discussing these spaces, they write:

> The stifling confines of Åmål offer limited recreational spaces for its youth and the urban shopping centre and park are places for congregation and social contact. Ironically, communal spaces, such as the school and the park, effect a spatial intimacy through proximity; yet, the heterosexual imperative that operates in these public and populated spaces compels Elin and Agnes to effect a spatial distance with its necessary emotional and physical separation. (par. 12)

Here Mallan and Stephens emphasise that the public spaces within the film are constructed as sites where heterosexual relationships develop. Thus, the confines of the small town are associated with the confines of heteronormativity, as the spaces that populate the film, containing the two protagonists, are linked to a "heterosexual imperative" (par. 12). The confines of the small town are also associated with the characters' experience of boredom. As Spencer notes, Elin and her sister Jessica are often depicted in their home: "a cramped flat on a quiet housing estate in a small town where nothing ever happens" (52). Agnes, on the other hand, is consistently contained within her bedroom: the ultimate site of teenage boredom.

While boredom describes the experiences of the two protagonists, it also describes their perspectives on the heteronormativity that underpins life in sleepy Åmål. In one key scene mid-way through the film,

Elin expresses both her boredom and her dissatisfaction with these normative constraints. Standing on a bridge in the middle of the night, she says to Agnes, "You know what my nightmare is? That I'll stay in Åmål. That I'll never move from here. That I'll get kids, a car, a house … All of that. Then my husband leaves with someone younger and I'm stuck with kids that just scream and nag." This is the life that Elin's mother has, watching the lottery for entertainment and dreaming of how her lot could have been different. Significantly, this is also very similar to the life that Mona predicts for herself in *My Summer of Love* when she says that she is "going to get a job in an abattoir, work really hard, get a boyfriend … churn out all of these kids … with mental problems. And then … wait for menopause … or cancer." Yet *Show Me Love* differs quite significantly from the problematic depiction of adolescent boredom at the core of *My Summer of Love*. Although Mallan argues that the relationship between Agnes and Elin is a survival strategy, a means of overcoming boredom in a small town, it seems to me that in contrast to *My Summer of Love*, *Show Me Love* actually embraces boredom rather than purely seeking to transcend it (117). This boredom is embraced both structurally and narratively within the film through elements of repetition and containment that emphasise the potential of the threshold that scholars such as Anderson, Benjamin and Phillips have discussed.

In her brief discussion of the film, Spencer describes it as being constructed around a "seething inertia" (52). This inertia is emphasised through a multitude of scenes that capture Agnes lying in bed and Elin killing time with her sister or watching television with her boyfriend. The majority of the shots within the film are close-ups and medium close-ups, capturing only the heads and shoulders of the characters. Very rarely are whole figures depicted within the frames of the film. Such shots emphasise the containment of the characters, creating a claustrophobic mood, as if the space around them is constantly in the process of closing in on them. In some scenes, this framing emphasises the feeling that the characters are on the verge of being smothered by their own boredom. As Spencer highlights, as the romance begins to develop between these characters, "the inaction reaches fever pitch: Agnes waits for a phone call; Elin abandons a party to hang off a motorway bridge spitting on passing traffic" (52).

There is only one scene in which Agnes and Elin are not framed in this way by the camera. In this scene, the two girls attempt to hitchhike to Stockholm and literally run away from the boredom of their lives to somewhere that is potentially exciting. Initially framed in the same, confined

manner, Agnes and Elin discuss their lives momentarily before finding the courage to attempt their hitchhiking escapade. Here the composition drastically changes and, standing on the side of the road, the girls appear small, eclipsed by the large highway. A car stops and they passionately kiss in the back seat, overwhelmed with excitement and anticipation of adventure. As Spencer writes, "For a moment it's just them, the engine, and the swelling sounds of Foreigner's 'I Want To Know What Love Is' before the driver orders them out" in what she describes as the "sublime anti-climax" in a series of "disappointing deflations" that pepper the film—Elin trying to get high on her mother's heartburn medicine, Agnes' party, kids aimlessly hanging around the town (Spencer 52). The original framing resumes when the adventure is cut short because no further cars stop to give them a lift and, significantly, this framing is maintained throughout the film.

In addition to composition and framing, the aesthetic of boredom is also expressed within a kind of structural repetition throughout the film. There is limited variation in the types of shots used and most of these shots are similar in duration. In addition to this, the camera is mostly immobile, moving only to track the movement of the figures within the frame, and a constant colour palette extends throughout the film with the textured images consistently dominated by red and orange tones. Contained by both the town and the camera, these characters are, as Spencer argues, "trapped in a real teen purgatory, waiting for childhood to end and life to begin" (52).

At the narrative climax of the film, the two girls lock themselves in a bathroom at school so that they can have a private conversation. The girls are subsequently forced to publicly "come out" in a move that Mallan and Stephens argue, "is part of a broader teen rebellion against continuing ennui and oppressive strictures that limit their lives" (par. 12). As Elin opens the bathroom door, the title song begins to play on the soundtrack and she assertively tells her peers: "Here I am. This is my girlfriend. Excuse me. We're going to fuck now." In the final scene, the two girls leave the school and return to Elin's house, where they drink chocolate milk together in the warm sunlight of her bedroom. Returning to the opening scene in this manner, the conclusion of the film marks a significant departure from the mode of representation I outlined earlier, in which queerness is rendered as a means of escaping teenage boredom. In this scene, the girls embrace the boredom of their lives in Åmål and continue to be framed by Moodysson's constraining camera. While in many ways it

Fig. 5.4 Within the diegesis, boredom is ultimately embraced by Agnes and Elin. Through this, the potential for queer happiness emerges

seems as if not much has changed for the characters because they continue to be framed in the same manner, it also seems that by embracing their boredom they have transcended its stifling significance, crossed a temporal threshold and "momentarily reconfigure[d] time–space" (Anderson 747). Returning to the chocolate milk that marked Elin as a profoundly bored character, the final scene of the film feels optimistic, as if a queer potential has arisen through this sensibility of boredom. While they entered the film as unhappy, restless figures in separate spaces, Agnes and Elin now appear content in the newness of a relationship and the company of each another. Neither chocolate milk nor Åmål will ever be the same for these girls. Appropriately, Robyn's girlish voice closes the film with the lyrics to "Show Me Love" (Fig. 5.4).

On Boredom, Love and Queer Happiness

Articulated beautifully in this final scene, what emerges from the structural boredom of *Show Me Love* is the potential for both queer love and a particular kind of happiness. This is not a happiness derived from what Ahmed or Berlant might describe as "the good life"—Ahmed describes

this as being based on a heteronormative logic that dictates that girls must find happiness in the love of a good man and domestic privacy—but rather in something akin to what Ahmed discusses within her chapter on queer happiness in *The promise of happiness*. Against the pervasive image of the unhappy queer figure, Ahmed theorises two models of queer happiness. The first is articulated through the "happy queer," a figure who follows normative happiness scripts towards a position of homonormativity within which queerness is erased. This is not the mode of happiness that emerges at the conclusion of *Show Me Love*. Rather, the film enacts Ahmed's second mode: the "happily queer" (117). In contrast to the "happy queer," this figure does not "necessarily promote an image of happiness that borrows from the conventional repertoire of images" (115). Rather, the "happily queer" refuse to give up their desires, even if these desires take them outside the parameters of happiness (117). This "happily queer" figure "still encounters the world that is unhappy with queer love, but refuses to be made unhappy by that encounter" (117).

This mode of being "happily queer" is useful for queer theory because, as Ahmed argues, it offers a means of refusing "to give happiness the power to secure a specific image of what would count as a good life" and a means of thinking about happiness without negating the political force of unhappiness, which, according to Ahmed, "can be affirmative" because it can "gesture toward another world" (119, 107). Thus, in conceptualising the "happily queer," what Ahmed offers is a means of theorising a non-normative relation to futurity, and what *Show Me Love* does, particularly through its final scene, is enact this theory. Ahmed imagines a queer future as "what is kept open as the possibility of things not staying as they are, or being as they stay" (197). Through this, she conceptualises a revolutionary happiness that "would be alive to chance, to chance arrivals, to the perhaps of a happening" (198). In countering the scripted, linear logics of normativity, Ahmed argues that "the happy future is the future of the perhaps" (198). It seems to me that in its final scene, *Show Me Love*'*s* two teenage protagonists let go of their desires to escape the confines of the small town and open themselves to this "future of the perhaps" (Ahmed 198). They achieve this by embracing the restless boredom that stifled them at the beginning of the film, and in its place they find queer love and the "perhaps" of a revolutionary queer happiness, as well as a new appreciation for chocolate milk.

Anderson argues that boredom can be interpreted as a radical emotion because at its core it expresses a "will-to-connect differently" (Anderson 747). Boredom always contains this potential because, according to Svendsen,

it "pulls things out of their usual contexts. It can open ways up for a new configuration of things" (142). Yet, as I have highlighted, characters within contemporary screen media often seek to overcome boredom and this is especially true in the way that contemporary screens represent queerness and queer girls. As I have noted, one of the dominant ways of depicting queerness is as "a passing phase" of adolescent boredom. In the quote that opens this chapter, Phillips argues that adolescence is punctuated by great spells of boredom, elongated states of "suspended anticipation" in which "the mood of diffuse restlessness … contains that most absurd and paradoxical wish, the wish for a desire" (68). As I have argued, while *My Summer of Love* and *The O.C.* employ queerness as a means of evading these spells of boredom, *Show Me Love* embraces them, engaging boredom as the means of connecting with a particular kind of queer happiness. Through an aesthetic that is marked by repetition and containment, *Show Me Love* illuminates the queer potential of boredom and in embracing this, follows the lead of the poet Joseph Brodsky, who argues that "when hit by boredom, go for it. Let yourself be crushed by it; submerge, hit bottom" (109). As Moodysson demonstrates through Agnes and Elin, being bored is not so much about being stifled as it is about being on the threshold of something new.

CHAPTER 6

Time Imagined Queerly in Mashup Videos: "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" and "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile"

The video I am watching on my computer screen is titled "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For." It is low quality: black and white, pixelated. It does not fit the usual aspect ratio of the YouTube player, so the website has automatically generated pillar-boxes to frame the visuals. Two black vertical bars on either side of the fuzzy images draw my gaze to the centre of the YouTube player and I find myself compelled to watch the video over and over.

"Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" is a prime example of a new digital screen form called mashup. Like many mashups, it lasts only a few minutes in duration. It begins with a medium shot of a blonde teenage girl crouching on a bed, looking directly into the camera. Accompanied by the opening bars of a punk-pop tune, the innocent-looking blonde looks to the left of screen, then the video cuts to a medium close-up of an older woman standing within a doorframe. She is tall, dark, handsome and knowing. This image is a striking contrast to the one that preceded it. The relationship between the girl and woman is firmly established by the shot/reverse shot sequence, which also marks their oppositions: light/dark, innocence/experience. These few moments also mark a structural disjuncture between vision and sound unique to this new form of screen media: a mashing of clips from *Mädchen in Uniform*, one of the earliest lesbian films, and the sounds from a punk-pop song from 2002 titled "What I Go to School For." The title "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For," is reflective of this *mashing*. What interests me, indeed

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compels me, to watch this contemporary reworking of a canonical queer text over and over is that it reprises one of the earliest cinematic images of the queer girl for a generation of queer girls who have not seen it before.

There is another mashup that I watch over and over. It is titled "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile." Like "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For," it is low quality, spans only a few minutes and revises the narrative of a source text. Yet "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" is unique in that it imagines the story of a relationship between two actors: Lea Michele and Dianna Agron, best known for their roles on the popular US teen series *Glee*. It is created by *mashing* together still images and short videos of the two actors with a poem titled "Photograph," performed by queer activist and slam poet Andrea Gibson.

Over the last decade, the development of new technologies has created an expanse of new spaces for the appearance of the queer girl. With the tools of Web 2.0 and digital imaging as well as digital film and television production, representations of queer girls seem abundant on video-sharing websites such as YouTube, Tumblr and Vimeo as well as individual blogs and fan pages on Facebook. No longer limited to the cinema or television screens, queer girls now appear in a variety of digital forms including web series, video blogs and mashups. While this is still a small fraction of YouTube's content, searching for "queer girls" on YouTube currently returns 161,000 results that consist of video blogs, music videos, mashups, animations, recorded performances and short films, as well as experimental and activist videos. The search term "queer girl" significantly increases the results, with a return of 241,000 items.

In this chapter, I explore the status of the queer girl within this new media landscape, framing my discussion around the mashup as a new form of screen media. As I will show, the mashup is related to fan videos and an experimental branch of filmmaking. However, as I will argue, the relationship between producer and source material in mashups is significantly different from that of those traditions. Though I acknowledge the lineage of this practice and theoretically contextualise this new form of screen media, the main aim of this chapter is to show how this form makes possible innovative and potentially radical ways of telling stories and expressing time.

Mashup

> There is an important lesson to be learned with mashups: sometimes things are so different they don't feel like they belong together, but the big difference between them is what makes them great. (*Glee* episode 1.08)

Originating in a musical context, the term mashup is commonly used to describe a hybrid song created through the combination of two or more source songs. More than a remix, as TV series *Glee*'s Mr. Schuester explains, "a mashup is when you take two songs and mash them together to make an even richer explosion of musical expression" (*Glee* episode 1.06). In an audio-visual context, mashup refers to a type of short video that has become an internet phenomenon, a video created through *mashing* together scenes and stills from feature films and/or television series with music that, at least initially, does not seem to fit.

In March 2006, Australian the newspaper *The Courier Mail* featured an article by Michael Hill and Jennifer Dudley on an emerging phenomenon known as the "digital mash- up." The article, which provides an early print definition of this phenomenon, described and defined a number of aspects of the emerging culture of the digital mashup. Anonymous artists, they claimed, who parodied familiar films and uploaded them to the internet, were at the forefront of a new form of digital art. Taking their material from a plethora of online sources, these artists "then mix them in a digital blender to create something new—usually something dripping with irony" (17). The resulting products are called mashups, "just like the do-it-yourself songs that combine tracks from separate tunes" (17). Just as a musical mashup involves the combination of two songs, a video mashup involves the fusion of music and image from different original sources. Within these videos, the visuals are decontextualized from the source materials, re-edited and recontextualized in relation to both one another and the soundtrack. To mash is to force together, and in this context the force combines elements that would not ordinarily be associated with one another. Mash up as a form of expression is thus violently expressive yet the intent behind it, that desire to generate a rich "explosion of … expression," renders it both playful and exciting (*Glee* episode 1.06).

This form has become a widespread internet phenomenon and is particularly visible on video-sharing websites such as YouTube. Gaining recognition throughout the mid-to late 2000s, YouTube is a site that has become, as Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau argue "the very epitome of digital culture not only by promising endless opportunities for viral marketing of format development but also by allowing 'you' to post a video which might incidentally change the course of history" (11). It is not surprising, then, to learn that mashup has recently been identified by media theorist Mark Amerika as the defining cultural activity of the digital age.

From Media Criticism to Film Theory: The Re-edited Video

Scholars in both media and film studies have previously explored practices of editing and reassembling screen content. Within media criticism, the re-edited video has been discussed extensively within scholarship on fans and fandom. This scholarship has tended to focus on three interconnected concepts: vidding, remediation and para-textual content (or off-screen studies).

What links this scholarship is a broad focus on the creation of (and pleasures associated with) re-edited video content. For instance, in his influential *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins first described re-edited video as a fan practice of "express[ing] a particular slant on a program" (230). More recently, Jonathan Gray, who terms re-edited videos "user-created paratexts" describes them as "cutting a personalised path through" the industry's version of a media text (20). Although Francesca Coppa, who discusses the critical potential of re-editing videos, outlines a different approach, her focus remains on the content creators. Viewing such videos as "visual essays," Coppa argues that they should be understood as a "form of collaborative critical thinking," and as a means of "heal[ing] wounds created by the marginalisation, displacement, and fragmentation of female characters" (5.1, 5.2). That is, Coppa argues, such videos communicate both admiration and critique of the source material; they are created out of the fan's love of a text but also their desire to revise or rewrite that same text.

While these approaches offer insight into both the motivation and pleasures derived from re-editing and re-authoring content, this focus does not consider the materiality of the form or enable discussion of the ways that meaning is constructed and articulated through particular videos. In order to understand mashup as a form of screen media, a closer focus on the textual properties of the re-edited video is required and this is where film theory becomes a valuable conceptual tool.

The practice of reassembling cinema and video has long been discussed by film theorists, particularly in relation to the found-footage mode of filmmaking and montage styles of editing. In *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* published in 1993, film theorist William C. Wees draws attention to the reflexivity of this practice, arguing that "whether they [the films] preserve the footage in its original form or present it in new and different ways, they invite us to recognise it *as* found footage, *as* recycled images" (11). What Wees suggests here is that

the practice of repurposing screen content draws attention to the materiality of the image and invites the audience to look more closely at the images before them. Wees demarcates documentary, avant-garde and appropriative uses of these techniques. He argues that these forms embody, in turn, realist, modernist and postmodernist aesthetic practices. It is the modernist aesthetic practices of the avant-garde that Wees identifies as the most critically and politically useful form of recycled images (33–34). Wees argues that the political potential of the modernist aesthetic is best mobilised within collage and he pits this against more appropriative forms of image recycling: "collage is critical; appropriation is accommodating. Collage probes, highlights, contrasts; appropriation accepts, levels, homogenises" (46–4l7).

Taking up these ideas in the mid-2000s, Adrian Danks contests Wees' rigid distinctions, arguing that they "go against the 'global' or dispersive spirit" of many contemporary found footage films. These contemporary films, argues Danks, "aim to break down the clear demarcations between forms" through the employment of a wide variety of images and sounds (242). The mashups that have caught my attention do borrow from the traditions of the avant-garde, recontextualizing sounds and images from film and television to express a unique sensibility through cultivated disjunction, but they also break down demarcations between forms as Danks describes. These videos are critical in the way that Wees conceptualises as they "probe, highlight … [and] contrast" elements of screen media, yet they borrow in a "global" or "dispersive" manner, borrowing from a wide repertoire of sources (Wees 46–47; Danks 242).

Nicole Brenez draws attention to two uses of found footage within experimental filmmaking that resonate particularly well with mashup. Brenez's "Cartography of Found Footage" analyses a number of modes of avant-garde filmmaking and argues that appropriated materials are employed within experimental film both elegiacally and critically. In this essay, Brenez argues that the aim of the elegiac experiment is to "fragment the original film, to deconstruct it in order to keep only specific moments" (93). In the process of re-editing and foregrounding these moments, Brenez argues that the filmmaker fetishizes them, abandoning classical narrative form and continuity editing in the process. In the critical mode, however, filmmakers thrust their images together or violently destroy them. Brenez argues that through these processes, found footage renders images autonomous, emphasises film stock as a substance and "tends toward new areas and new forms of montage"

(94). This latter point suggests that this innovative form of filmmaking has the potential to invoke significant shifts in the way that films are constructed. Experimental filmmaker Jonas Mekas also emphasises this, musing, "I bet all the films produced in Hollywood over the last 80 years will soon become raw material for future filmmakers" (qtd. in Brenez 94).

These accounts of re-editing practices articulate a significant difference between media and film theory perspectives on the re-edited video. The difference between them lies in the proximity of the artist to the texts that they work with. Where media theory's fan operates in a close relationship with the text, the avant-garde filmmaker creates at a distance, often destroying the material in the process. Yet neither of these relationships between artist and text adequately explains the queer girl mashups that have captivated me so much over the past few years. Mashup is not created out of love for a source text, nor from a desire to dismantle it. Rather, the creator of mashup straddles the positions of fan and experimental filmmaker, bringing the techniques of the avant-garde into mainstream cultural spaces. The videos within the following sections do not destroy their original content or themselves; rather, they reassemble film and television texts, breathing new life into the tired linearity of the mainstream and heteronormative. Considered along these lines, the works are most reminiscent of the montages that film critic Raymond Durgnat describes in his essay on the Left Bank group of filmmakers: Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Agnes Varda, William Klein and Georges Franju. In this essay, Durgnat argues that works by these filmmakers are marked by "brevity, swift change, switches of latitude, parody, pastiche, modulations and ruptures of mood, topic, genre" (133). However, it is Durgnat's description of the Left Bank's use of montage that most intrigues me. Within these films, Durgnat argues that "montage expedites abstraction; juxtaposition becomes interaction; images, colliding, 'extract' aspects from, or propose new connections for, each other" (133). Emphasising this, he argues:

> The stream of images underlines process, change, transformation. The voice-over adds the agility and abstraction of words; vastly expedites exposition; and can swiftly emphasise selected aspects-and-connections of the images … Spoken word, printed word, images, music, sounds weave their separate 'lines' around and through one another, like a jazz of phenomena, converging, diverging, cross-checking, destabilising. (133)

This brings me to the most intriguing quality of mashup as I see it: the temporal effects of this new form, or to be more specific, the new kinds of screen temporality and transformation that this form enables. These are particularly significant for the figure of the queer girl because it allows us to consider some of the ways that the temporality of queer girlhood can be re-figured by new forms of screen media.

When we consider mashups in this context, we become privy to the ways that layers of image and sound collide with and transform one another in these dynamic productions. This process of juxtaposition opens up familiar texts, not only queering the mainstream source materials from which these videos are composed, in some generalizable sense, but opening the way for new expressions of queer experience and desire. But the most radical implication of this perspective is that it illuminates the capacity of mashup to imagine time queerly. This is particularly evident when we consider each of the syntactical elements of these videos as temporal fragments. Thus, the process of mashing entails not only the collision of images and sound but also the act of reassembling temporal fragments of screen media, pushing these into new relations and giving rise to new ways of articulating time.

What I am describing is similar to what Nicholas Rombes posits as "the theory of convergences" in *Cinema in the Digital Age*, published in 2009 (10). Building on Lawrence Weschlers *Everything that Rises*: *A Book of Convergences*, Rombes theorises a method of accessing digital databases in order to "select images from separate times and places that seem haunted by one another … juxtapos[ing] seemingly unrelated images in ways that reveal secret correspondences" (10). Employing Weschler's experiences as the basis of this theory—Weschler writes: "I have increasingly found myself being visited by … uncanny moments of convergence, bizarre associations, eerie rhymes" (1)—Rombes argues that within digital culture "old images and new are in play with one another, creating opportunities to see correspondences that may have remained buried previously" (10). This recognises both "the potential for randomness in the cinema" and "the randomness that digital systems make possible" (10). In his writing on "ephemeral media," Paul Grainge also emphasises this potential of the digital when he describes YouTube as "a platform for retrieving, remediating and ultimately sharing fleeting images drawn kaleidoscopically from the audiovisual past and present" (8).

As Rombes argues, digitisation has made it possible "to notice strange correspondences between film images, a sort of secret history" and he invites readers to "imagine a history of cinema that traces these patters,

these hauntings, where images jump across time and suddenly reappear in the most unexpected of places" (11). Such an imagination displaces a more traditional, linear view of film history, queering historical screen culture through radically non-linear borrowings and connections from a large corpus of screen media. Enacting this queerly imagined screen history, the two mashups that I analyse within this chapter link fragments of film and television with sounds and music from different contexts. As I will demonstrate, the difference between the source materials within these videos gives rise to a moment of disjuncture when they are mashed together, as their familiar sounds and images are temporarily rendered strange and ambiguous. However, beyond this initial moment of discordance, what these videos reveal are "strange correspondences" between screen images, sounds and temporal fragments that, as I will argue, are also queer correspondences. But first we need to consider the temporality of this new form.

Notably, this element of mashup is explored within Amerika's discussion of remix artists. In his musings on mashup, Amerika considers the creators of such works as "novelty generators" who perform in the immediate present (17). Experimenting with form himself, Amerika writes:

> Imagine a complexity of thing being made or made up
> by those in the creative immediacy of
> their selectively manipulated data *experience*
> aesthetically remix their creative presence
> into what we might call *novelty*
> novelty as the always already remixed present
> revealing the mysterious resonance of
> social relatedness *as* currency in an emerging market of ideas. (14)

Manipulating their own experience, Amerika's remix artists operate in a present moment that is "always already" a remix of their past (14). With their novel creative output, Amerika argues that remix artists forge social relations via "views," "retweets," "reblogs" and "likes" that act as a form of currency in the "emerging market of ideas" (14). While this is an innovative way of thinking about mashup, Amerika's discussion of the temporality of the form is limited to the time of its production. What this approach does not consider is the question of what the form does, generally, in terms of the manipulation of time. That is, this kind of attention to the time of production does not explore the way that time is expressed through these works or how structures of temporality are embedded within individual videos.

However, close analysis of individual and collective works *can* address these problems, drawing attention to the way that these videos stage collisions not only between sound and image but also between moments of time. Considered in this manner, as I have argued, this new form has the potential to disrupt not only the narratives of film and television but also cinematic and televisual time. This has significant implications for the queer girl because it allows the temporality of this figure to be disrupted. The uniqueness of mashup as a form of screen media lies in the fact that it contains sound and image that interact with one another. In the creation of these short digital videos, the boundaries between sound and image become malleable. The resulting texts are marked by sound that bleeds into image, image that bleeds into sound. In addition to this, the works also mash together separate temporal lines and fragments, working like Durgnat's montage: converging temporal moments in ways that "propose new connections" (133).

Highlighting these aspects of this new form of screen media allows us to consider, as Garret Stewart does in *Framed-time*: *Toward a Post-filmic Cinema*, the new pathways that digital technologies can produce, particularly in relation to time. In this work, Stewart contrasts the temporality of analogue and digital film, arguing that digital technologies enable time itself to become "a malleable *medium*" of the screen (2, emphasis original). If we build on Stewart's argument and emphasise the "malleable" temporality of mashup, we can locate this form as Rombes does, that is, as a sort of history of cinema where images suddenly jump across time, dissolving distinctions between past and present.

The temporality mobilised by mashup is thus akin to Babette Mangolte's description of digital time. In her essay "A matter of time: analogue versus digital, the perennial question of shifting technology and its implications for an experimental filmmaker's odyssey," Mangolte argues that digital time is "inscribed in layers on a set screen" (264). When you investigate these layers, as Mangolte illuminates, "you find bits of time memory one on top of the other without chronology. You travel through time now by travelling through layers of pixels" (264). While Mangolte laments the loss of the analogue and the sense of time passing that it expresses, Rombes offers an optimistic perspective and highlights the potential of digital technologies to express new relations to time. When the temporality of these new forms is considered through a Deleuzian framework, their capacity to innovate via disruption becomes all the more clear. For this reason, I propose that the mashup be regarded as a form of minor video.

Mashup as Minor Video

To explain how mashup functions as a form of minor video, mobilises a minor temporality and represents queer girlhood, it is necessary to spend a few moments unpacking the concept "minor." The Deleuze–Guattarian concept of "minor" originally appears in their examination of Franz Kafka in *Kafka*: *Toward a Minor Literature*, published in 1975 and translated into English in 1986, and is further elaborated on in their subsequent works, most notably *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, published in 1980 and translated into English in 1987. It is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari theorise the categories of "major" and "minor" as reflections of power, rather than as quantitative oppositions. While the major is theorised as "a constant and homogenous system," the minor is described as "a potential, creative and created, becoming" (*Thousand Plateaus* 117). Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari, the minor offers an escape, a "becoming" of something else. Minor is, therefore, a position of marginality from which a subversive power may be attained.

Developed throughout a number of Deleuze and Guattari's writings, these conceptualisations are frequently applied to particular functions of language within literature. Deleuze and Guattari locate two conjoined tendencies of these uses of language. The first is "an impoverishment, a shedding of syntactical and lexical forms," which occurs simultaneously with the second: "a strange proliferation of shifting effects, a taste for overload and paraphrase" (*Thousand Plateaus* 115). Deleuze and Guattari theorise a creative use of these tendencies, conceptualising a "minor literature" that sits in complex relation with dominant culture. Deleuze and Guattari outline three key elements of minor literature: "the deterritorialisation of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation" ("Minor literature" 18).

As these characteristics are complex, it is worth taking the time to examine them in more detail before considering them in relation to the digital screen. Firstly, Deleuze and Guattari explain that minor literature does not arise from a minor language; "it is rather that which a minority constructs in a major language" ("Minor literature" 16). Accordingly, they argue that "language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialisation" within minor literature ("Minor literature" 16). From *Thousand Plateaus*, we can understand the term "deterritorialisation" to mean the act of taking power, control or order away from a place that is already established. Thus, this first characteristic of minor literature refers to a redistribution

of power in relation to language, to the appropriation or reuse of a major language by a minority. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

> If the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility. ("Minor literature" 17)

The second characteristic of a minor literature is that it is political by its very nature. Deleuze and Guattari assert that "everything in them is political" ("Minor literature" 17). This political nature is thus connected to the third distinguishing characteristic of minor literature: its collective and enunciative value. Here the individual speaks in a collective voice and Deleuze and Guattari explain that it is "positively charged with the role and function of the collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation" ("Minor literature" 17). Using their position of marginality, the minor deterritorialises "majoritarian" culture and, through this, imagines new relations between language, culture and politics. Minor uses of language thus work to "make language stammer, or make it 'wail,' stretch tensors through all of language, even written language, and draw from it cries, shouts, pitches, durations, timbres, accents, intensities" (*Thousand Plateaus* 115).

With regards to cinema, Deleuze and Guattari believe this concept lends itself particularly well to the language of the screen. Indeed, Deleuze himself takes up the question of what a minor cinema might entail in his second cinema book, *Cinema II*: *The Time-image*, published in 1985 and translated into English in 1989. In this work, Deleuze further elaborates on the concept of minor through his discussion of modern political cinema. He locates minor cinema as that which addresses a people who have yet to solidify, merges the political and the private, and is based on a fragmentation rather than unification: to employ a Deleuzian terminology, this cinema is molecular, not molar (*Time-image* 215–224). In addition, Deleuze locates a further quality of minor cinema when he argues that minor cinema is produced by the act "of taking real and not fictional characters, but putting these very characters in the condition of 'making up fiction,' of 'making legends,' of 'storytelling'" (*Time-image* 222). For Deleuze, the condition or process of "storytelling" crystallises the minor as it "is not an impersonal myth, but neither is it a personal fiction" (*Time-image* 222).

Building on Deleuze's conceptualisation, D.N. Rodowick also approaches the question of what a minor cinema might look like within *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, published in 1997. Within it, Rodowick argues that Deleuze's philosophy is "in the deepest and most complex ways, a philosophy of time" (*Time Machine* xiii). Thus, his interpretation of minor cinema strongly emphasises the temporality of this mode of expression. Rodowick bases his interpretation of minor cinema on Deleuze's account of the process of *fabulation*, translated throughout *The Time-image* as "storytelling function." While Rodowick notes that the concept initially appears simple, he draws attention to an important ambiguity in the French on which he bases his conceptualisation of minor cinema. He notes that while "*fabulation* is telling stories (*recits*)," the term *recit* actually translates into English as "an oral or written relating of real or imaginary acts," which, he argues, has three important implications (*Time Machine* 156, 157). Firstly, this suggests that storytelling is "performative in the philosophical as well as the theatrical sense" (*Time Machine* 157). Secondly, it emphasises that the form of the story "may be oral or written—and in the cinema is related acoustically as well as visually" (*Time Machine* 157). The final implication is that "the *recit* is neither precisely a document nor a fiction, but a form of enunciation that gravitates between these poles in a free indirect relation" (*Time Machine* 157). Therefore, as Rodowick asserts, "this performative oscillation between the oral and the written, the true and the false, is at the heart of the 'storytelling function,'" and is in turn at the heart of minor cinema (*Time Machine* 157).

Rodowick's work provides us with a definition of minor cinema as the creation of a new and foreign cinematic language operating within the dominant classical narrative film (*Time Machine* 1634). This cinema is created from a minoritarian situation and oscillates between truth and fiction with, as Rodowick argues, the aim to "free fiction from the model of the true" (*Time Machine* 160). It achieves this by constructing a complex soundscape comprised of acoustic layers and denaturing the relationships between sound and image, present and past. In doing so, it stages a becoming-other wherein, as Rodowick argues, "new potentialities for desire and identity can be expressed" (*Time Machine* 163–164, 155).

Rodowick is not the only scholar to have taken up the Deleuze-Guattarian concept of minor in relation to cinema. The concept has also been employed within feminist film theory. For instance, in *Too Soon Too Late*: *History in Popular Culture*, published in 1998, Meaghan Morris links feminist film theorist Claire Johnston's work on women's cinema

to the minor through Deleuze and Guattari's key question: "How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language they are forced to use" (19). Responding, Morris writes:

> While it refers to the experience of immigrants and colonised people, this question is echoed obliquely in the concerns of early feminist criticism and Johnston's work on 'women's films made *within the system*' of Hollywood's social and cinematic codes. A minor literature is not 'marginal,' it is what a minority constructs *in a major language*, and so it is a model of action from a colonised position within a given society. In this it differs from theories that propose, like Laura Mulvey's early work in film, to found an alternative system. (xvii, emphasis original)

Building on this in *Women's Cinema: The Contested Screen*, published in 2002, Alison Butler argues that women's cinema is "'minor' rather than oppositional" (19). Drawing on Morris, Butler argues that "women's cinema is not 'at home' in any of the host cinematic or national discourses it inhabits, but … is always an inflected mode, incorporating, reworking and contesting the conventions of established traditions" (22).

Patricia White further complicates the feminist application of Deleuze and Guattari in her influential article "Lesbian minor cinema." As a particular aesthetic, White's lesbian minor cinema deflects "audience demand for familiar stories, happy endings, repeatable pleasures, identity assurances" (410). Within this aesthetic, White identifies "an embrace of the insignificant" and a rejection of "predictable narratives in favour of an unrealised potential" (411). She also finds a "poetic, energising force that encourages borrowings and connections" in Deleuze and Guattari's account of the minor (412). Such a force enables the minor mode to be applied to other forms of screen media including mashup for, as I have shown, this new form of screen media is also constructed around "borrowings and connections" between films and television series, shots, stories, music and sounds.

Significantly, White adds a new dimension to the concept by emphasising the English use of the term "minor" to designate youth and thus links minor to the figure of the girl. White identifies a particular style of lesbian filmmaking located in the works of Akerman and Sadie Benning that is marked by "a certain "poverty"—in terms of means of production and aesthetic approach" (410). Her readings of Akerman and Benning "attend to the aesthetic transformations of particular texts in which reduced means

(short, low-budget or small-gauge formats, minimal narrative and sets) become signature authorial practices, ways of inscribing desire" (414). Exemplifying this is Akerman's portrayal of lesbian youth in her first film *Je*, *tu*, *il*, *elle* (1974) and her revisitation of this subject in *Portrait of a Young Girl at the End of the 60s in Brussels* (1994). However, White also theorises this "lesbian minor cinema" through the films of Jennifer Montgomery (*Age 12*: *Love with a Little L* [1991], *Art for Teachers of Children* [1995]) and Su Friedrich (*Hide and Seek* [1996]). In her discussion of these works, White identifies formal, stylistic and narrative consistencies across the minor mode. She argues that these films are linked by their format, "the short or short feature shot on 16 mm, 8 mm or analogue video," as well as a particular "deaestheticisation" that is achieved through black-and-white or hand-processed footage (419). These formal and stylistic elements are what White means when she refers to the "poverty" of the minor mode.

In addition to this, White identifies a primary concern across all of these works: the "inchoate sexual and gender identities of their young female-bodied protagonists" (419). While these lesbian minor films "deal with the interstitial moments between childhood and adolescence or adolescence and adulthood" they do not incorporate girlhood "into an even line of developmental growth or … a nostalgic back-story" (White 419, 417). Rather, as White argues, they are "inconclusive and liminal," conveying "a sense of being stuck, and of simultaneously being nowhere" (White 419, 416–417). Here White builds on Deleuze and Guattari's work on the figure of the girl as "an abstract line, or a line of flight" to argue that "lesbian minor cinema" expresses "the 'minor' as an open-ended, unfinished state" (Deleuze & Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 277; White 416). As Deleuze and Guattari write: "girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes" (*Thousand Plateaus* 277). Based on this conceptualisation, the "lesbian minor" of White's "lesbian minor cinema" constantly slips between childhood and adolescence, adolescence and adulthood, without being recuperated into narratives based on normative developmental models of "growing up."

What interests me most about White's use of the minor to theorise lesbian cinema is this emphasis on the concept's relation to temporality. Highlighting the mode's interest in "inconclusive and liminal" stories, White links this form of minor cinema to Freeman's concept of "temporal drag," arguing that both embody a "queer displacement of generational

models of history and futurity" (425). To elaborate on this, what White identifies in her analyses of "lesbian minor cinema" is that the minor acts as a means of displacing linear and sequential models of development. She subsequently employs it as a theoretical tool to examine a mode of filmmaking that inflects dominant logics of temporality and narrative.

White's application of Deleuze and Guattari's concept provides us with a particular critical lens for understanding films made by and about lesbians and draws attention to the minor as a concept that is especially suited to the minority figure that I am most intrigued by: the queer girl. Yet it is the temporality of videos such as "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" that most explicitly links White's conceptualisation of "lesbian minor cinema" to this new form of screen media. To understand these queer girl mashups as a form of minor video is to understand popular film and television, especially the formal and narrative conventions they engage with, as major languages. Considered this way, what gets "mashed" within mashup is the language of cinema and television: expectations of genre and narrative, tired clichés of coming out and coming of age, queer characters that exist only as "rapid bursts" of non-heterosexuality before disappearing into oblivion and queerness that exists only subtextually.

Mashup can thus be considered "minor" in the Deleuze-Guattarian sense, as the resulting texts are creative experiments with these expectations of genre and narrative but also with the syntax or building blocks of cinema and television itself. Created through the work of fragmenting and then reassembling screen content (materials are acquired through download, edited and re-uploaded online), these videos are often digitally degraded and express an impoverished "minor" aesthetic through their pixelated, fuzzy visuals. They work within the dominant screen language because they must always be created out of existing representations.

To understand mashup through White's particular application of "minor," rather than a strictly Deleuze-Guattarian conceptualisation, is to understand the mashup as a cultural form that also experiments with the temporality of screen media. For what White offers that Deleuze and Guattari (or Deleuze himself) do not is a means of considering the (minor) temporality of the queer girl within this new form.

Engaging the minor as a form of temporality, we can build on White's conceptualisation to explore mashup as a form that expresses marginality as that which is slightly off-the-expected-beat or out-of-time through displacing the rigid temporal registers of classical narrative film. With these temporal tools, one can draw attention to the ways that mashups animate

"the space around the beat" as Jodi Brooks describes it in her discussion of the temporalities of visibility (par. 20). Brooks builds on Paul Gilroy's analysis of Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* and explores the way that questions of visibility and invisibility are tied to questions of time and rhythm. Brooks argues that "invisibility's time signature could be broadly described as being based around the off-beat" yet this "is an off-beat in which the space around the (anticipated) beat is activated and primary" (par. 15). That is, she continues, "it is not simply the missing of the beat that is important here, but rather the space around the beat is charged" (par. 15). In a similar way, mashup emphasises and plays with rhythms of visibility and invisibility through the representation of queer girlhood and the spaces around it. Mashup mobilises these particular temporalities of the minor mode through both the cultivation of a particular rhythm and displacing the linearity of the classical narrative film.

Minor Queer Girl Video: "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" and "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile"

As I have already noted, "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" is a low quality video created through the process of mashing together short clips from *Mädchen in Uniform* (dir. Leontine Sagan, 1931), one of the earliest lesbian films, and a punk-pop song from 2002 titled "What I Go to School For." Visually, the mashup expresses the "poverty" that White identifies within "lesbian minor cinema" and this is achieved through a "deaestheticisation" of the imagery: the black-and-white footage of the original film is digitally degraded with each download/edit/upload cycle and the resulting clip is pixelated and blurry (Fig. 6.1). The video is best viewed on YouTube's "small player" as the larger format of "full screen" dramatically emphasises this pixelation.

Beyond these visual elements, the narrative structure of the video signals a distinctly minor mode of operation. It is here that "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" links to Deleuze and Guattari's original conceptualisation of the minor and further enacts White's particular articulation of this concept. There are three distinct narratives at play within this video. The first is that of the original film, a story about an adolescent girl who is sent to a Prussian boarding school and develops a crush on her teacher. However, as Rich suggests, the original film is equally

Fig. 6.1 "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" is created by mashing together an early lesbian film with a punk-pop song from 2002. The black-and-white footage of the original film is digitally degraded as it is mashed with music

about "the teacher who repudiates her own role as an agent of suppression and wins her own freedom by accepting her attraction to another woman" (44). Representing the teacher through Deleuze and Guattari's process of becoming-girl, the video unifies these two narrative threads of the original film. The second narrative at play is that of the song, a story about an adolescent boy's sexual fantasies about his female teacher. When this audio combines with visuals, the third narrative emerges. This narrative, in which the adolescent girl's crush on her female teacher is *mashed* with the adolescent boy's sexual fantasies, is a "queered" version of both of its sources. With this third narrative oscillating between the voice of the song and the visual representation of the boarding school, the adolescent boy's sexual fantasy becomes that of the girl and the girl's innocent crush is emboldened with sexual desire, rewriting the former. Like White's "lesbian minor cinema," these narratives are based around an "inconclusive and liminal" period between adolescence and adulthood. Corresponding with this is a structural liminality that is embedded within the video as its narratives are articulated in between distinct fragments of sound and image.

Created through the literal fragmentation of an older form of screen media, this mashup emphasises the "strange correspondences" between old and new images that Rombes argues are enabled by digital culture (10). Along with the oppositional clashes between sound and image, there are affinities within these elements—moments of resonation between music, lyric and image—that express a particular rhythm and make this video so complex. The rhythm of "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" is expressed on multiple registers. The upbeat tempo of the song remains constant throughout the video. However, moments of slowness are expressed through lingering close ups of faces, while faster, more intense moments are expressed through contemporary fast-paced editing techniques and quick contrasts within the frame. In the relationship between the sound and image, the video gains a distinct rhythm of its own. It is here that the image and sound truly bleed into one another, as this changing rhythm is located both in the image (through shot composition and editing) and in the soundtrack. The result of the interplay between these elements is an infatuating rhythm of anticipation and urgency that spans the entirety of the video.

Both Rodowick and White note the rhythmic and temporal qualities of the minor. However, White takes this further, arguing that "lesbian minor cinema" rejects an "even line of developmental growth." These scholars conceptualise minor as something off the beat or out of sync with the dominant. From the minor position of temporal marginality, "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" expresses this rhythm as it builds to climax. The bridge of the original song cements the relationship between the two characters in the fantasy of the adolescent narrative with the soundtrack's narrative voice asking the teacher to "Tell me I'm what you go to school for." This is followed by a repeated audio cue—"I'm what you go to school for"—that acts as a form of narrative closure. The video, however, holds off on this closure for a few seconds. It is important that the audio and visual markers do not occur simultaneously, as this opens a space of ambiguity, a queer space of "unrealised potential" that is fleeting but nonetheless significant because it ultimately ruptures expectations of linear narrative progression (White 411). Here the video makes major language "stammer," stretching "tensors" through it and drawing from it "durations, timbres, accents, intensities" (*Thousand Plateaus* 115). Shifting the temporal regimes of the majoritarian, the video displaces dominant screen culture's valorisation of linearity, causality and narrative climax, reworking and contesting these conventions

through asynchrony. From a position of temporal marginality, this work evokes minor temporality as a method of reassembling duration. Staging collisions not only between sound and image but also between moments of time, the video disrupts what Rodowick describes as "the ineluctable linear drive of filmic temporality," converging temporal fragments in the way that Durgnat once described: "like a jazz of phenomena, converging, diverging, cross-checking, destabilising" (Rodowick, *Virtual Life* 52; Durgnat 133).

The mashup "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" engages the minor in a similar way to "Madchen in Uniform—What I go to School for," that is, as a means of forging "another consciousness and another sensibility" from within dominant cultural spaces (Deleuze & Guattari, "Minor literature" 17). Like "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For," this video is low quality, pillar-boxed and spans two and a half minutes in duration. What marks it as distinct is that it tells the story of a relationship between real people, not fictional characters within a source text (Fig. 6.2). This means that the visual fragments are sourced from a repertoire of "real life" rather than a film or television series. Using mostly candid photographs, it imagines a romantic relationship between Lea Michele and Dianna Agron,

Fig. 6.2 "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" uses still images to tell the story of a relationship between real people, not fictional characters within a source text

two of the female stars of the US television series *Glee*. In the series, these actors play Rachel and Quinn, rivals who vie for the attention of the male lead, Finn. Enacting an alternative to the overbearing heterosexuality of their storylines, this video suggests that underneath their performances, the two actors are deeply in love. It begins with individual sepia-toned publicity photographs of the actors, their names superimposed in white text in the middle of the frame. These images introduce Lea and Dianna as the central figures and immediately convey an aesthetic that permeates the video. Unlike the effervescence of "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For," this video is remarkably sad; it feels as if it is mourning the loss of a relationship, but because this is a relationship that never existed—or perhaps it would be worth saying was never *allowed* to exist—the tone of the video is explicitly melancholic. Emphasising this are the transitions between each photograph: a slow dissolve, resulting in the first image leaving a trace on the second, a watermark of the past on the present. Through this, the video expresses a particular kind of sadness that is tied to the feeling of holding on to mementoes when a relationship or person has slipped away, a desperate clinging to the past through material objects and the immaterial effects that we associate with them.

In these opening moments, the soundtrack consists of a single acoustic guitar, softly strumming. This simple soundscape emphasises the melancholic mood of the video while allowing the images to take precedence in the foreground. After the first two photographs, the subsequent visuals consist of still images of the actors together and the soundscape becomes more complex. The first image is a candid coloured photo that fills most of the frame. It is here that the lyrics of the soundtrack begin. Significantly, these lyrics come from a poem titled "Photograph" written and performed by American slam poet and queer activist Andrea Gibson. Although Gibson has released this poem on CD, the audio that is employed within the mashup comes from a YouTube video of Gibson's performance of this piece at Rockwood Music Hall in New York in 2009. Having been lifted from another video, this soundtrack demonstrates the potential of the form to, as Durgnat identifies within the montage, collide and extract aspects from other images and "propose new connections" (133).

In this instance, the elements of the video combine to express a queer way of seeing that links a politically charged queer voice to a mainstream television series, employing the former as a means of imagining the queerness of the latter. Some of the images are publicity and paparazzi shots of the actors but others appear more personal, more intimate, like photos or

postcards you would send to your friends saying, as the poem does, "wish you were here." More intimate still are the photographs that feel as if they are lifted from a personal photo album. A black frame with two figures embracing in the middle, bodies pressed against each other, faces too. Behind them, lights shine like stars and Gibson's impassioned words about queer love. Oscillating between the audio and the visual, this video enacts Deleuze's process of *fabulation* by putting real characters into "the condition of 'making up fiction'" and, in denaturing the relationship between truth and the imagined, it renders the real as another malleable element of storytelling (*Time-image* 222). It also embodies the *recit*, as Rodowick describes it, presenting its audience with a form that is "neither precisely a document nor a fiction but a form of enunciation that gravitates between these poles" (*Time machine* 157).

In representing a romantic relationship between Lea and Dianna, this video plays with the rhythms of visibility and invisibility, as described by Brooks. Through particular manipulations of the source materials, the mashup creates queer girls out of two public figures who are consistently tied to the representation of heterosexuality. Yet while Brooks locates the time signatures of visibility and invisibility within the rhythms of "shot duration, figure movement, editing, and sound-image relations," it is primarily in the relationship between the audio and visual elements that this video conjures the visible from the invisible (par. 20). Colliding and manipulating audio and visual fragments, "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" operates within this mode, establishing a particular rhythm as each image dissolves into the next.

At the beginning of the video, each image appears in silence for the briefest of moments before Gibson's voice emerges on the soundtrack. As the video progresses and the intensity of the poem increases, the rhythm between the sound and image transforms. The images dissolve mid-way through the lines of poetry, some linger while others appear only for a short amount of time. The longer each image lingers, the more detail we notice in it, the more meaning it gathers, as the lyrics of the poem contextualise it within this imaginary relationship. The rhythm established is reminiscent of the poetry technique enjambment, constructed when a phrase or sentence is broken between two lines or verses. This technique often places emphasis on different parts of the poem, obscuring rhyming elements. As such, it cultivates a rhythm that is slightly off the beat or out of sync with one's expectations of poetic form. In a similar way, "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" cultivates asynchrony as the transitions between

images refuse to match with the transitions between lines. It presents a story that is out of step with the expectations that these images conjure on their own, transforming the gestures of friends into the more intimate gestures of lovers. Through this, what this video does is imagine queerness where there is only heterosexuality. While this may seem simple enough, its effect is significant. What this video articulates is an acknowledgement that "the people are missing," which, as I have noted, Deleuze argues is the basis on which minor cinema is created (*Time-image* 219). As he writes in *The Time-image*:

> Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people. (219)

In imagining a relationship between Lea and Dianna through images that are, in other contexts, linked to heterosexuality, "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" deterritorialises the "majoritarian" from a position firmly within mainstream culture. It uses fragments of celebrity culture to imagine queerness in the place of heterosexuality and contribute to the invention of a people who, because they are marginalised within popular culture, do not (yet) exist. Rather than addressing a people that already exist, this video imagines *what* screen culture would be like *if* they did.

What If? Imagining Time Queerly Within Mashup Videos

Bringing together the audio and the visual, the real and the imaginary, both "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" and "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" envision a time of "what if" that is evocative of the way that Victor Turner describes the time of liminality:

> a time outside time in which it is often permitted to *play* with the factors of sociocultural experience, to disengage with what is mundanely connected, what … people may even believe to be naturally and intrinsically connected, and to join the disarticulated parts in novel, even improbable ways. ("Antitemporality" 253, emphasis original)

Mashups such as "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" and "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile," link fragments of screen media in much

the same way as Turner describes, bringing together sounds and images in novel ways. However, the radical potential of this form lies in its capacity to play with temporality, to "disengage what is mundanely connected" and reconnect the temporal fragments in new "improbable ways" (Turner, "Anti-temporality" 253). These videos question *what if* we could borrow fragments from here and there and use them to imagine new stories, new forms of representation and time, new figures of the queer girl? What kind of future could we imagine then?

In asking these questions through screen content that has been reassembled, held on to, collected and played with, mashup expresses a unique relation to both temporality and futurity: borrowing the old as a means of imagining the new. Rejecting the dominant temporalisation of the queer girl as "a passing phase" that I have identified throughout this book, these videos operate as Muñoz describes, expressing "a desire for another way of being in the world and in time, a desire that resists mandates to accept that which is not enough" (365). These videos offer pleasure, hope and the ability to hold on to, reassemble, archive and play with screen media. Through this, they mobilise an optimistic relation between queerness and time, actively speculating about a future that is open and teeming with potential. Yet it is important to remember that this potential is tied to the figure of the queer girl, as it is from the minority position that this queer temporality can best be enacted. As Muñoz argues: "to live inside straight time and ask for, desire, and imagine another time and place is to represent and perform a desire that is both utopian and queer" (26). As Deleuze and Guattari write of minor, we can say that mashup forges "the means for another consciousness and another sensibility" and performs the utopian desire of imagining time queerly (17).

Whether it is through the elongation of fleeting moments of queer desire within screen culture, the alteration of the rhythm and feel of the source material or the decentralisation of ideas of narrative progress, mashup creates spaces where alternative temporalities can be conceptualised, where "futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers" of the dominant temporal regime (Halberstam 2). In opposition to the forward thrust of heteronormative time that is associated with forms of mainstream film and television that I have identified in this book, mashup mobilises the radically non-linear qualities of queer and digital temporalities, expressing a time that is open to chance, reversals, randomness and the desire of "what if?"

The mashup, as I have theorised it, is based around this question: *What if* two Hollywood starlets were in love? *What if* the queer girl could linger? *What if* there was an escape route from the forward thrust of heteronormativity? *What if*? In mashing up representations of the queer girl and experimenting with temporal renderings of queer subjectivity and experience, mashups such as "Madchen in Uniform—What I Go to School For" and "Lea and Dianna: The First Mile" invite us to imagine the answers and express the queer desire.

CHAPTER 7

Beyond Girlhood

I have argued throughout this book that the queer girl is dominantly represented through a temporal metaphor, "a passing phase," through which queerness and futurity are rendered incongruous. With girls' queer experiences, feelings and intimacies typically represented only within a liminal moment of youth, the figure of the queer girl has thus come to embody the structuring logics of heteronormative temporality. Such logics valorise what Edelman describes as "reproductive futurism" by ensuring that queerness is valued only as a temporary phase on the way towards normative heterosexual adult identity.

It is crucial that we question whether there are alternatives to this, because these alternatives can point to ways around the structuring logics of heteronormative time, allowing us an "escape route" from its relentless forward thrust. In the dominant anti-social queer paradigm, the rejection of heteronormativity might be achieved by embracing the "nothingness" of queer time, which is to completely reject aspirations for the future and find empowerment in negativity. Edelman best articulates this move by arguing that queers must respond to the logics of heteronormative temporality by refusing both hope and the future. However, it has not been my aim to situate this book within queer theory's anti-social thesis. Rather, my analysis has pointed to clusters of films, television series and videos from a range of cultural contexts that express the temporality of this figure in a way closer to Muñoz's assertion that "the future is queerness's domain" (*Cruising Utopia* 1). The chapters of this book show just how

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screen media can achieve this: by stretching out the time of the queer girl; by loosening the fixity of past-present relations by drawing the past and present alongside one another; by aesthetically embedding the time of teenage boredom; and finally, by fragmenting temporal moments, to forge new forms of textual expression.

In the preceding chapters I have located texts that embed a sense of hope for the queer future and articulate the temporality of the queer girl in ways that challenge the heteronormative temporalisation of this figure. However, this hopeful image of the queer future is also beautifully articulated within three recent films that explicitly deal with the issue of queer girls growing up: *Life Partners* (2014), *Appropriate Behaviour* (2014) and *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (2013).

Susanna Fogel's *Life Partners* presents its audience with two women, Paige (Gillian Jacobs) and Sasha (Leighton Meester), who have been best friends since college and have spent their mid-twenties bonding over single life. They have regular television nights, drink wine together in their pyjamas and complain about terrible dates, parties and lovers. Their co-dependent friendship is presented as uniquely intimate. And, in the film's trailer, this friendship is initially positioned as potentially repressed romantic love. The trailer begins with a brief shot of the two women dancing in the street at a pride march. They both wear colourful clothing and rainbow accessories. Laid over this image is dialogue that leads into the following shot. Paige complains, "I just want to meet a guy that I like as much as you … is that too much to ask?" and the image cuts to a medium close up of the two women in a bed together. "I hate everyone but you," Sasha responds. The trailer cuts back to the pride march, capturing the women playfully hugging in the centre of the frame. Then, the film's tagline is overlaid as a series of quick edits present viewers with visual highlights of the women's friendship: "Two best friends. Sasha is gay. Paige is straight."

Made explicit within this trailer is the central tension of the film: the changing nature of the once-intimate friendship between the women. Things turn sour when Paige, the straight friend, finds love and happiness in a man (Adam Brody). This, of course, begs the question: Does the title *Life Partners* refer to the intimacy between the women? Or does it refer to the heterosexual relationship that unsettles the film's narrative equilibrium? Regardless of the answer, there is a key idea crystallised in the demising relationship between Sasha and Paige: that this kind of intimacy between women is acceptable only for a period of adolescence (albeit an extended one) until it is time to "grow up" and get a boyfriend. Once

again, queerness is depicted through a temporal metaphor. It arises during a liminal period only to dissipate upon maturation into normative heterosexual adulthood.

Within the film proper, Paige goes on a date with a man, which rapidly turns into a relationship and subsequently engagement. They move to a suburban paradise and almost immediately begin to host barbeques. Paige's conversation topics shift from trash television, lovers and parties, to children, careers and neighbourhoods. Sasha, the quintessential queer girl, appears either unwilling or unable to follow the same heteronormative life trajectory. She continues having television nights (alone), drinking wine (alone) and complaining about her terrible dates, parties and lovers to anyone who will listen. In short, she refuses or is refused the process of "growing up," losing her most intimate friend in the process. While the film concludes on an optimistic note, the character of Paige demonstrates once more this book's central contention that the representation of queer intimacy, feeling and experience has been, and continues to be, determined by a temporal logic that most commonly limits queer feelings or experiences to a temporary period of youth.

Yet it is through the character of Sasha that *Life Partners* presents us with an alternative. While the end of the film hints at a kind of coming of age moment for Sasha, this is never truly realised. At the film's conclusion, she questions her lifelong dream to be a musician and breaks up with her "immature" girlfriend in order to presumably pursue a more "serious" life path. Yet the film's epilogue returns us to Sasha's exuberant girlness when Paige asks what song she will sing at the upcoming wedding. For a few moments, Sasha playfully evades the question. At first she refuses to answer, then she begins to make up vulgar lyrics, then she eschews the question entirely by revealing her outfit for the following day: a cringe worthy powder blue tuxedo. This playful refusal of the socially sanctioned "seriousness" of marriage mobilises Sasha's girlness as a means of decentralising the milestones of normative heterosexual adulthood (Fig. 7.1).

At the heart of this film, then, is a larger set of questions. These also arise through the dominant set of temporal logics that I have identified throughout this book: If the queerness of the queer girl arises during a liminal period of adolescence, then how does this figure "grow up"? Do queer girls become queer women? Do they hold onto their queerness or is this subsumed into normativity, leaving queer girls to grow into homonormative or perhaps heterosexual adults? What kind of future awaits the queer girl, if any at all? What proves to be most significant is that

Fig. 7.1 The epilogue of *Life Partners* (Susanna Fogel, 2014) highlights Sasha's refusal of the "seriousness" of marriage

Life Partners offers a future for the queerness of the queer girl while also providing a glimpse into the queerness of girlhood. "Growing up" for Sasha does not mean leaving her queerness behind as "a passing phase." Nor does it necessarily mean losing the "girlness" of her queer identity—by the end of the film, both parts of her identity are affirmed.

These questions around queerness and futurity are also raised within Desiree Akhavan's *Appropriate Behaviour*, a film about coming of age in an era of arrested development. The film follows Shirin (Desiree Akhavan), a directionless young woman struggling to negotiate her intersectional identity (bisexual Iranian in New York) and to find her place in the world after graduating college. We meet Shirin in the aftermath of a breakup. She looks distraught as she rides the subway alone at night. The camera lingers, in medium close up, on this image: a lost woman on a train to nowhere. In the next scene we see Shirin in an apartment, removing all traces of herself. She takes condiments and spices from the kitchen, photos and her hair from the bathtub drain. Her girlfriend Maxine (Rebecca Henderson), the one she has broken up with, sits in the bedroom and watches. She returns a box to Shirin, claiming that she does not feel right keeping the object within it. Shirin leaves the apartment, shedding her

Fig. 7.2 In the opening of *Appropriate Behaviour* (Desiree Akhavan, 2014), Shirin demonstrates radical girlness as she boldly walks along a Brooklyn street with a dildo in her hand

belongings in a dumpster and storming off (Fig. 7.2). Then we see what was in the box: a strap on dildo. Shirin rebelliously retrieves it, walking boldly along a Brooklyn street with the dildo swinging by her side. This is radical girlness. Over this image the film's title is overlaid, bringing the question of "appropriate behaviour" to the fore.

At its very core, Akhavan's film confronts its audience with the question of what is "appropriate" in different social and cultural contexts and how this changes as we grow up. Akhavan's protagonist, Shirin, is challenged by these questions as she attempts to negotiate her intersectional identity. One the one hand, she fails to fulfil the role of middle-class Persian daughter. Her sexuality, unknown to her parents, is in direct conflict with this ideal. It is one element of her identity that stands in the way of her attaining the milestones and achievements of a successful (heteronormative) life. Beyond this, she has no steady job and shares a ramshackle apartment with a number of bizarre artist-types. In an early scene, the unsuccessful nature of her life is emphasised when her family members talk about how much potential she *had* in high school. It seems as if Shirin's life is too queer (in the sense of diverging from the normative path) to be "appropriate." On the other

hand, however, she struggles to fit into the role of ideal "queer" woman. Many times throughout the film, Shirin's ex-girlfriend Maxine suggests that she is not "queer" enough because she has not achieved a particular set of queer milestones. Maxine tries to get her to affirm her queer identity by reading queer literature, by becoming more politically engaged and by coming out to her parents. In the end, it seems that the demise of the relationship between Shirin and Maxine is attributed to her failure to comply with the "appropriate" behaviours of queer identity.

By positioning Shirin as a figure caught between these two identities, Akhavan uses the question of "appropriateness" to challenge the temporality associated with teleological and progressive/progressing milestones. Akhavan's film suggests that it is not enough to substitute heteronormative milestones with "queer" ones. Rather, it suggests that we must critique the politics of value underpinning the supposed necessity of attaining these milestones. By the end of the film, Shirin does come out to her family but does not become "appropriate" through this action. In fact, its impact is left ambiguous: "I'm a little bit gay," she tells her mother, to which she responds, "No. No you're not."

At the level of narrative structure, Behavior further questions the forward driving nature of these temporal logics. Very early within the film, the narrative splits. Through flashback we follow the development of the lost relationship, and in a parallel narrative we follow Shirin coming to terms with the breakup. In this way, the film gestures both to the past and the future. While this in itself is not a revolutionary storytelling technique, Akhavan carefully constructs both narratives to reflect Shirin. Like her protagonist, Akhavan's dual narratives seem to obscure teleological progression in favour of awkwardly flowing along in their own time.

While this is one of the most interesting qualities of the film, it has garnered negative attention from a number of critics via reviews that valorise the forward movement of classical narrative style. For instance, in his review of the film, Stephen Holden of *The New York Times* described it as characterised by "disorganisation" and "lack of an ending or even a sense of direction" (par. 6). Similarly, Garry Goldstein of *The Los Angeles Times* described the film as "uneven" with slowing momentum towards the end (par. 4). *Washington Post* critic Stephanie Merry described the narrative as having a "haphazard feel" (par. 4) and David Rooney of *The Hollywood Reporter* argued that "it remains tethered to the unambitious structural template and narrative choppiness of episodic television" (par. 2), as if television is inherently bad. To me, it is this narrative aimlessness,

a deliberate and considered lack of direction that works so well to de-emphasise milestone-logic and put the forward driving and linear nature of heteronormative temporality into question. But this lack of direction does not mean that the film cannot end on a hopeful note. Mirroring the opening shot, we see Shirin ride the subway. This time, however, it is daytime and the sunlight shines across her face. We do not know where she is going, but as the film has reminded us, the destination is not what matters.

Another perspective on queer futures beyond girlhood is presented within Abdellatif Keniche's *Blue is the Warmest Colour*, winner of the Palm d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013. This film tells the story of an intense love affair between a teenage protagonist Adele (Adèle Exarchopoulos) and Emma (Léa Seydoux), an art student a few years older. Presented in two parts, which are reflected in the original French title *La vie d'Adele—Chapitres 1* & *2* (The Life of Adele—Chapters 1 & 2), the film opens with teenage Adele, leaving her house to go to school. She walks away from the camera, towards a bus that she misses. This is one of many beautiful shots capturing Adele walking away, which come to function as a motif throughout the film. Each one is reflective of changing circumstances and uncertain futures.

In the first part of the film, Adele comes to terms with the realisation that she is not content with the heterosexual future ahead of her. Her high-school boyfriend is uninspiring, and he does not sexually satisfy her. When she sees Emma for the first time, she immediately imagines the future anew. This happens early on in the film. On her way to meet her boyfriend, Adele waits at a crossing for the lights to change. A busker in the background provides the soundtrack as he melodically plays a hang drum. The music sounds like the fluttering of a heartbeat. Filmed in close up, we see Adele take a sharp intake of breath, which is followed by a reverse shot identifying what she has seen. It is Emma, waiting at the opposite side of the road, her arm around a girlfriend. The image returns to Adele, who looks nervous. Her gaze shifts between Emma and the space around her. Exarchopoulos' face is immensely expressive. She looks as if she wants to keep looking but is afraid of what might happen if she does. The girls share a brief moment of eye contact when crossing the road. This leaves Adele bewildered, as if she has seen something that we have not. Soon after, her queer imaginings take the form of lustful dreams that become lustful reality. From here, the film tells the story of the developing relationship between Adele and Emma. It is all tight frames and hugely affective close ups.

Fig. 7.3 The first shot of *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013) reveals changing circumstances and uncertain futures

The second part of the film spans a few years of Adele's adulthood. In between them something is missing. Time has passed, and in this time the relationship has begun to unravel. In this part of the film Emma and Adele live together and have begun their careers as artist and teacher, respectively. On some level, they are both dissatisfied with the relationship, which has become based on comfort and domesticity. In fact, they only occupy the same space within scenes in the home. Here, the tight frames and close ups that characterised the first part of the film are replaced with domestic confinement and sparse soundscapes. The relationship soon crumbles, leaving Adele devastated. What is most significant about this is that it eschews a neatly packaged and saccharine conclusion. However, the original French title *La vie d'Adele—Chapitres 1* & *2* suggests that there is more to come and that Adele's search for freedom, which she does not find in her high school boyfriend and she ultimately does not find in Emma, is not complete (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4).

After seeing this film with my friends, many commented that it ends on an unhappy note. I must wholeheartedly disagree. The film concludes with Adele leaving Emma's art exhibition without saying goodbye. She walks alone down a street, and then turns a corner both physically and

Fig. 7.4 In the final shot of *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013), Adele walks away from her imagined future with Emma, into the next chapter of her life

figuratively. It is hard not to notice a stop sign ahead of her, but then again, that sign only matters for the cars on the road. She can continue walking, and she does. Her gait is not triumphant, but it is also not anguished. It is without hesitation. In this final shot, the camera does not move as Adele walks away from it. Instead, it remains fixed as she walks into an uncertain but not unhopeful future. To me there is an overwhelming sense that this is not an ending, but rather a beginning, as if she is leaving all of this behind as she walks into the next chapter of her life. She is moving on, and we are not following her. Then, non-diegetic music begins to play. It is the sound of the hang drum that we heard when Adele first saw Emma, so it is fitting that we hear this again when she finally lets go of that part of her life.

In many ways, *Blue is the Warmest Colour* is a film about imagined futures. It is about the momentous impact of seemingly insignificant moments, and chance encounters, like the meeting of two soon-to-be lovers who catch each other's eye as they cross the street. The film suggests that such encounters are valuable because they allow for the imagining of futures outside of teleological progression and normative futures.

But the film is equally about being dissatisfied and looking elsewhere for fulfilment, it suggests that there is power in rejecting teleology or the future that lies ahead.

I opened this book pointing to tensions between the affirmation and renunciation of queer identity. It is my view that queer girls, as they are represented through screen media, emerge on the threshold of these tensions. And, in many ways, this book navigates between them. It does so by contrasting dominant representations of queer feelings, intimacy and experience with heterogeneous imaginings of queer life, including the question of what queer time might look or feel like. With this in mind, I conclude with a proposition: that a diverse range of texts, including those analysed within the pages of this book, suggest that the figure of the queer girl can offer a set of valuable new ways of conceptualising temporality, ways of thinking about time that counter the temporal logics and constraints of a heteronormative present, our heteronormative present. These texts offer a different understanding of human development, sexuality and girlhood in which neither queerness nor girlness is outgrown as part of reaching maturity. They remind us, as Stockton argues, that "there are ways of growing that are not growing up" and, as Deleuze and Guattari write in *Thousand Plateaus*: "girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, sexes" (Stockton 11; Thousand Plateaus 277). In these texts it is not only the queerness of the queer girl that remains part of her subjectivity as she moves into her queer future, her adult life, but also something of her radical "girlness."

This radical "girlness" is expressed through *Sugar Rush*'s Kim, television's first queer girl protagonist who keeps one foot in her past just to be safe. It is also present within *Skins*, the series that builds its narrative around an ongoing girlhood. Radical "girlness" is tied to the radical boredom of *Show Me Love*, particularly within the final scene in which the two teenage girls drink chocolate milk and listen to Robyn. It is in the nostalgic gaze of *Butterfly*, the film that uses images of girlhood to reimagine womanhood, and digital mash ups that use existing representations to construct girlhood and queerness anew. Radical "girlness" is also expressed within films that push against "girls." It is in the exuberance and humour of *Life Partners*' queer girl Sasha. It is her playful refusal to take serious the normative milestones experienced by her best friend. It is also distilled within *Appropriate Behaviour's* protagonist Shirin as she walks through a Brooklyn neighbourhood with her strap on dildo in her hand. The object is evidence of her failed relationship, but the shot presents us

with a defiant and fearless statement of her sexuality. Radical "girlness" is also present within *Blue is the Warmest Colour's* Adele as she walks away (or more correctly turns a corner) without hesitation from her imagined future, ready to start anew.

In each of these examples, the queer girls eschew the logic of forward-moving, linear and teleological temporality, offering a new way of thinking about queerness, girlhood and growing up. Thinking about queer girls in this way—as both represented and rhetorical figures—offers a means to interrogate the terms of their appearances in contemporary screen media and to draw attention to their potential as a site for generating new discourse around queerness and time. What is now required is further research that seeks to work across disciplines, cultural paradigms and modes of representation to elaborate on alternative temporalisations of queer girls in screen media. It is these alternatives that must be brought to light in order to investigate and generate future possibilities and representational strategies for change.

Appendix: 15 Years of Queer Girls, 1998–2013

1998

Show Me Love [Fucking Åmål]. (Sweden) Dir. Lukas Moodysson—set in a dull Swedish town, an unpopular girl falls in love with her popular schoolmate.

Set Me Free [Emporte-moi]. (Canada/Switzerland/France) Dir. Léa Pool—follows a young tomboy struggling with her sexuality and the mental illness of her parents.

1999

But I'm a Cheerleader. (US) Dir. Jamie Babbit—satirical comedy about a popular cheerleader, sent to gay conversion camp.

Memento Mori [Yeogo goedam II]. (Korea) Dir. Tae-Yong Kim & Kyu-Dong Min—horror film about a relationship between two alienated high school girls.

Revolutionary Girl Utena [Shôjo kakumei Utena: Adolescence mokushiroku]. (Japan) Dir. Kunihiko Ikuhar—anime film adaptation of popular manga and anime series about two high school girls who attempt to change the world.

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2000

Buffy the Vampire Slayer. (US)—Television series that featured an ongoing relationship between young witches Willow (Alyson Hannigan) and Tara (Amber Benson) until 2002.

Girls Can't Swim [Les filles ne savent pas nager]. (France) Dir. Anne-Sophie Birot—two teenage girls live in opposite parts of France but spend their summer vacations together.

2001

Clara's Summer [Clara, cet été là]. (France) Dir. Patrick Grandperret—summer camp is full of self-discovery for two friends.

Lost and Delirious. (US) Dir. Léa Pool—new student at a boarding school discovers that her roommates are lovers.

The Unfilial Daughter [*Ninü]*. (Taiwan)—memorial mini series about a terminally ill tomboy who nostalgically remembers her youth.

2002

Blue Gate Crossing [Lan se da men]. (Taiwan/France) Dir. Chih-yen Yee—sweet high school film about a teenage girl caught in a love triangle between her best friend and an attractive guy.

Once and Again. (US)—television series featured a five episode romantic storyline between teenage characters Jessie (Evan Rachel Wood) and Katie (Mischa Barton).

The Maiden's Dance [Tongnü zhi wu]. (Taiwan)—memorial romance telemovie.

Voice of Waves [Nanian xiatiande langsheng]. (Taiwan)—memorial romance telemovie.

2003

Thirteen. (US) Dir. Catherine Hardwicke—quiet student with tumultuous home life is befriended by a rebellious popular girl. Violence, drugs and sex ensue.

2004

Butterfly [Hu die]. (Hong Kong) Dir. Yan Yan Mak—married teacher begins a romance with a younger woman, while also nostalgically remembering being a queer girl.

D.E.B.S. (US) Dir. Angela Robinson—action comedy about high school students, who are secretly spies, features a romantic storyline between a hero and villain.

My Summer of Love. (UK) Dir. Pawel Pawlikowski—two girls from different socioeconomic backgrounds develop an intimate and dangerous friendship.

Neighbours. (Australia)—long running soap featured a brief storyline between two schoolgirls.

One Tree Hill. (US)—long running teen series featured brief bisexual-themed storyline.

The Journey [Sancharram]. (India) Dir. Ligy J. Pullappally—romance between teenage girls is threatened by an arranged marriage.

2005

2 Girls [Iki genç kiz]. (Turkey) Dir. Kutlug Ataman—two girls from different backgrounds rebel against their elders by forming a close relationship.

Degrassi: The Next Generation. (Canada)—featured a prominent queer girl storyline as queen bee Paige (Lauren Collins) engaged in a tumultuous relationship with bad girl Alex (Deanna Casaluce) until October 2007

Ghosts [Gespenster]. (Germany/France) Dir. Christian Petzold—a vulnerable girl shares a fleeting moment of intimacy with a tough young woman.

Love's Lone Flower [Gu lian hua]. (Taiwan)—memorial drama series about a woman's unrequited feelings for two female singers.

South of Nowhere. (US)—teen ensemble drama about an All-American family with a queer daughter, until 2008.

Sugar Rush. (UK)—teen comedy series about queer girl Kim (Olivia Hallinan), until 2006.

The O.C. (US)—popular teen series set in an affluent school. Short romantic storyline between Marissa (Mischa Barton) and Alex (Olivia Wilde) in 2005.

2006

Loving Annabelle. (US) Dir. Katherine Brooks—rebellious student seduces her female teacher.

2007

Dolls [Pusinky]. (Czech Republic) Dir. Karin Babinská—coming of age film that follows three friends on a road trip.

Sonja. (Germany) Dir. Kirsi Liimatainen—teenage girl becomes aware that she won't grow out of her feelings toward her best friend.

Spider Lilies [Ci qing]. (Taiwan) Dir. Zero Chou—webcam girl wants a tattoo from a woman who just happens to be her childhood crush.

Water Lilies [Naissance des pieuvres]. (France) Dir. Céline Sciamma—coming of age drama that follows a girl obsessed with the local synchronised swimming time.

XXY. (Argentina/Spain/France) Dir. Lucía Puenzo—follows a 15-year-old intersex person coming to terms with their gender identity.

2008

Anyone But Me. (US)—long running web series about a queer girl, until 2012.

Friday Night Lights. (US)—teen series about a football town featured a brief queer storyline.

Miao Miao. (Taiwan) Dir. Hsiao-tse Cheng—teenage girl develops a crush on her friend, who develops a crush on someone else.

2009

90210 (US)—contained a 10-episode story arc wherein one character briefly questioned her sexuality before promptly returning to heterosexuality.

Cuestión de Sexo. (Spain)—television series that developed a romantic storyline between two female characters.

Hollyoaks. (UK)—long running soap introduced a queer girl storyline that concluded when one character murdered the other.

Glee. (US)—queer teen musical series, began 2009 and introduced queer girls in 2010 and 2012.

Physics or Chemistry / Física o química. (Spain)—television series introduced a bisexual character until 2011.

Skins. (UK)—gritty teen series that featured a prominent romantic storyline between girls from 2009–2010.

2010

4.3.2.1. (UK) Dir. Noel Clark & Mark Davis—four friends, three days, two cities. One is a queer girl.

Coronation Street. (UK)—long-running soap introduced its first queer girl Sophie who fell in love with school friend Sian. Their relationship lasted until the end of 2011 when they broke up on their wedding day.

Fit. (UK) Dir. Rikki Beadle Blair—teen film about homophobia adapted from a play of the same name. Follows a group of gay and straight millennial students taking drama and dance class.

For 80 Days [80 Egunean]. (Spain) Dir. Jon Garaño & Jose Mari Goenaga—two elderly women meet and realise they were childhood lovers.

Hand aufs Herz. (Germany)—musical soap opera, featured a key romantic storyline between queer girls, until 2011.

Leading Ladies. (US) Dir. Daniel Beahm & Erika Randall Beahm—dance film about two sisters.

Pretty Little Liars. (US)—teen mystery series that features a prominent queer girl Emily (Shay Mitchell), currently still airing.

Spork. (US) Dir. J.B. Ghuman Jr—teen comedy about an intersex girl competing in a talent competition.

The Runaways. (US) Dir. Floria Sigismondi—based on real events, two rebellious teenage girls form a rock band that takes the world by storm.

2011

Bye Bye Blondie. (France) Dir. Virginie Despentes—two older women attempt to rekindle the romance from their younger years.

Daughters of Club Billitus [Clubbilitisui Ddal Deul]. (Korea)—telemovie about schoolgirl who seeks like-minded women at a lesbian club.

Joe + Belle. (Israel) Dir. Veronica Kedar—a drug dealer and psychopath fall in love after getting involved in an absurd murder.

Pariah. (US) Dir. Dee Rees—teenager juggles conflicting identities and desperately seeks the ability to express her sexual identity.

She Monkeys [Apflickorna]. (Sweden) Dir. Lisa Aschan—teenage girls on an equestrian team develop a competitive and intimate relationship.

You and I. (US/Russia) Dir. Roland Joffé—teenage girls fall in love after meeting at a t.A.T.u concert.

2012

Jack and Diane. (US) Dir. Bradley Rust Gray—feelings manifest in terrifying ways when two summer lovers are separated.

Degrassi (Canada)—long running teen series featured its third storyline about queer girls: Two friends fall in love and remain in a relationship until mid way through 2013.

2013

Ashley. (US) Dir. Dean Matthew Ronalds—destructive teenage girl falls in love with an older woman over the internet.

Blue is the Warmest Colour [La vie d'Adèle]. (France) Dir. Abdellatif Kechiche—schoolgirl disatisfied with her lot falls in love with an older art student.

Schoolgirl Complex [Sukûrugâru konpurekkusu: Hôsôbu-hen]. (Japan) Dir. Yûichi Onuma—set in a girls school, a senior member of the radio club becomes obsessed with the newest member.

Young and Wild [Joven y Alocada]. (Chile) Dir. Marialy Rivas—teenage girl seeks freedom after being raised in a strict religious family.

Select Filmography

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Age 12: Love with a Little L. Dir. Jennifer Montgomery. 1991. Women Make Movies, 1991. VHS.
All Over Me. Dir. Alex Sichel. 1997. Peccadillo Pictures, 2010. DVD.
American Graffiti. Dir. George Lucas. 1974. Universal Studios, 1998. DVD.
Amorosa. Dir. Mai Zetterling. 1986. Sandrew, n.d. VHS.
Anyone But Me. Created by Susan Miller and Tina Cesa Ward. 2008–2012. Web.
Appropriate Behavior. Dir. Desiree Akhavan. 2014. Kino Lorber, 2015. DVD
Art for Teachers of Children. Dir. Jennifer Montgomery. 1995. Water Bearer Films, 1998. VHS.
Ashley. Dir. Dean Matthew Ronalds. 2013. Amazon Instant Video, 2013. Web.
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Bye Bye Blondie. Dir. Virginie Despentes. 2011. BQHL Editions, 2012. DVD.
Candy Rain [Hua Chi Liao Na Nu Hai]. Dir. Hung-I Chen. 2008. Film.
Circumstance. Dir. Maryam Keshavarz. 2011. Lions Gate, 2011. DVD.
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Companions: Tales from the Closet. 1996. Dir. Nina Bergström. Cinema Guild, 1998. VHS.
Coronation Street. Created by Tony Warren. ITV, STV, UTV, 1960–present.
Cruel Intentions. Dir. Roger Kumble. 1999. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 1999. DVD.
Crush. Dir. Alison Maclean. 1992. Strand Releasing, 2005. DVD.
Cuestión de Sexo. Created by David Abajo, David Fernández and Ramón Tarrés. Cuatro, 2007–2009.
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Dawson's Creek. Created by Kevin Williamson. The WB, 1998–2003.
Degrassi Junior High. Created by Kit Hood and Linda Schuyler. CBC Television, 1987–1989.
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Dolls [Pusinky]. Dir. Karin Babinská. 2007. Outplay, 2009. DVD.
Drifting Flowers [Piao Lang Qing Chun]. Dir. Zero Chou. 2008. Wolfe Video, 2009. DVD.
Eat. Dir. Andy Warhol. 1963. Univideo, 2004. DVD.
Edward II. Dir. Derek Jarman. 1991. Image Entertainment, 2005. DVD.
Ellen. Created by Carol Black, Neal Marlens and David S. Rosenthal. ABC, 1994–1998.
Empire. Dir. Andy Warhol. 1964. Univideo, 2004. DVD.
Fish and Elephant [Jin Nian Xia Tian]. Dir. Yu Li. 2001. Ariztical Entertainment, 2006. DVD.
Fit. Dir. Rikki Beadle Blair. 2010. Peccadillo Pictures, 2010. DVD.

For 80 Days [80 Egunean]. Dirs. Jon Garaño and Jose Mari Goenaga. 2010. Homescreen, 2011. DVD.
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Ghosts [Gespenster]. Dir. Christian Petzold. 2005. Cinema Guild, 2009. DVD.
Girls Can't Swim [Les Filles Ne Savent Pas Nager]. Dir. Anne-Sophie Birot. 2000. Fox Lorber, 2002. DVD.
Girls in Love. Created by Indra Bhose, Rachel Tillotson and Karen Stowe. ITV Network, 2003–2005.
Glee. Created by Ian Brennan, Brad Falchuck and Ryan Murphy. Fox, 2009–present.
Hand aufs Herz. Created by Petra Bodenbach. Sat.1, 2010–2011; sixx, 2011.
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Hide and Seek. Dir. Su Friedrich. 1996. Outcast Films, 2005. DVD.
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Love Mime. Dir. Yiye Zhu. 2009. Film.
Love's Lone Flower [Gu Lian Hua]. Created by Jui-Yuan Tsao. CTS, 2005.

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Mosquita y Mari. Dir. Aurora Guerrero. 2012. Wolfe Video, 2013. DVD.
My Own Private Idaho. Dir. Gus Van Sant. 1991. Criterion, 2005. DVD.
My So-Called Life. Created by Winnie Hozlman. ABC, 1995–1995.
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Neighbours. Created by Reg Watson. Seven Network, 1985; Network Ten, 1986–2010; Eleven, 2011–present.
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Sonja. Dir. Kirsi Liimatainen. 2007. Picture This, Breaking Glass Pictures, 2010. DVD.
South of Nowhere. Created by Thomas W. Lynch. The N, 2005–2008.
Spider Lilies [Ci Qing]. Dir. Zero Chou. 2007. Wolfe Video, 2008. DVD.
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Sugar Rush. Created by Katie Baxendale. Channel 4, 2005–2006.
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